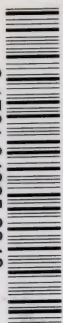


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BY

PERCIVAL J. COONEY

AUTHOR OF "THE DONS OF THE OLD PUEBLO"



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TORONTO :: :: S. B. GUNDY

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PREFACE AND DEDICATION

To the north of us a colony is growing to nationhood,—a land that holds within its confines all that makes a people great.

For they have sprung from the loins of the peoples who have done the great things of all time. In their soul is the steadfastness of the Saxon, the gayety of the Gaul, the tender sentiment of the Celt, and last, but not least, the stubborn granite of the Scottish hills. All this is theirs by right of blood and birth.

To preserve their individuality, they have wrought for more than a hundred years, betimes with great weariness. They have suffered, they have toiled, they have fought. Twice have they sent the invader reeling back from their threshold. Yet in them is neither hatred nor malice.

For theirs is a land where the sharpness of the seasons, the bite of the winter's frost, the scorch of the summer sun, moulds the minds and frames of men to a patient sturdy strength, such as the languorous indolence of tropic lands may never know.

To this land, to this people, to the home of my youth, a land of starlit winter nights and sunny summer days, of vigorous manhood and graceful womanhood,—to the Canada of my memory, this tale is respectfully dedicated.

Los Angeles, Calif.,

August, 1916

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To the historical articles concerning the Laird of McNab, which appeared in the columns of the *Scottish-American*, to the little brochure of Allan Fraser of Toronto, and especially to those gray-haired pioneers and Clansmen who, on many a summer day of long ago, charmed a bare-foot boy with their memories of "The Chief," the thanks and acknowledgments of the Author are due.

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KINSMEN

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CHAPTER I

A STRANGER UNWELCOMED

THE horseman reined his mount.

Echoing across the river bed and back again, a musket shot shattered the splendid silence of the Canadian spring-time. Old leaves forfeited the death-hold they had maintained all winter, and fluttered helplessly to the ground. A partridge alarmed and indignant strode across the yellow, sandy road ahead of the rider.

Far across the river an answering shot boomed mildly and died away in impotent reverberations. Behind the columnar tree trunks that bordered the roadway, some one had begun to beat a wild tattoo on a tin pan. Even as the traveller noted in an adjacent clearing, a settler busy with his spring ploughing, the object of his gaze abandoned his oxen, and disappeared in the all encircling forest.

Well above medium height, lithe and muscular, Barclay Craig was the type of man who would look well in uniform and epaulets. Dignity, even hauteur, was suggested by the poise of his head, and the unwavering masculine directness of his gaze. Yet for all that, his was a sensitive face. As his gauntleted fingers parted the carefully groomed brown beard at his chin, his brilliant hazel eyes were snapping in scornful annoyance at the mystery confronting him.

These people were fleeing from him as from one smitten with the pestilence: the gunshots were signals; the frantic

throbbing of the tin pan, a tocsin of danger, and the dinner horn, whose three plaintive notes now trebled across the stream, was no joyous summons to meat and drink, but a dread warning of his own unwelcome presence.

"A plague on such Highland manners," he fumed. "Sorry the day that mine own Scottish folk refuse to face the stranger in their midst and give him the courtesy of the road."

Hoofbeats sounded, and merrily approaching, a young man clad in homespun and riding bareback swung around a curve in the road ahead. At the sight of the stranger he suddenly drew rein.

"Give me the road to the Laird of McNab—to Kennell Lodge," Craig demanded angrily.

For answer the dismayed youngster mumbled something that sounded like "God save us," swung his steed about and with wild slashing of the goad, whirled out of sight up the roadway.

Barclay Craig was lost. The much-thumbed chart he had consulted so often during the day was defective or he had misread it. Already the lengthening shadows told that the night was approaching, and he had not even lunched. Manifest nowhere was the proverbial hospitality of the pioneer. For hours past in his ride through the almost unbroken forest he had come face to face with no living soul, and hurriedly barred doors had greeted his every attempt to secure information of his whereabouts.

He was not an accomplished woodsman. His twenty-eight years had been spent among kindlier scenes. The solemn, ivy-clad walls of Edinborough University had taught him naught of the lore of woodcraft, and the short months he had spent in Montreal were but a poor preparation for the boorish reception he had met for the past few hours.

This sunny May morning of 1837 had seen him riding out of the little village of Fitzroy harbour at the foot of the Lake Des Chats bound for Kennell Lodge, where he was to undertake important survey work for the Laird of

McNab, whose lands and tenantry extended for miles along the south bank of the Ottawa River.

He resumed his plodding journey, the uncertainty of his position weighing heavily on him in the increasing gloom. Once more the roadway circled about the shoulder of a low hill, and gave a glorious view of the turbulent Mada-waska. As the panorama marshalled past to his hastening hoofbeats, he saw signs of civilization ahead of him. A village lay at the cross-roads.

From the massive stone chimneys of the log cabins a score or more in number, smoke curled lazily, and appetising odours of cooked food greeted his nostrils. From the door of the blacksmith shop emerged a broad-shouldered red-haired man, with sleeves rolled to his elbows. Catching sight of Craig, he quickly grasped an iron bar, struck three times in rapid succession on the steel triangle that hung from the branches of a tree, then darted into the tangle of undergrowth behind the smithy.

Windows banged down, doors slammed shut. The few ragged children, who finger in mouth had been staring curiously at the stranger, vanished in a twinkling. Seated in his saddle Barclay Craig stared wonderingly about him. Not a soul was in sight. Save for the smoke curling indolently from the chimneys, and the mongrel hounds snuffing suspiciously at his horse's heels, no sign of life was there anywhere. The hamlet seemed deserted.

The frown on Craig's face deepened and then melted into a grim smile. Reluctant as he was to force himself on any one, it was no time for an observance of the conventionalities. He walked his horse across the street and thundered on a door with his riding whip; then bent over in his saddle and tried the latch. But his efforts brought no response.

Suddenly he dismounted and darted between two of the houses. His quick eye had caught the glimmer of a moving female figure amid a clump of cedars on the sloping hill-side. Swiftly he decided on a course of action; he would

steal a march on the girl and secure from her the information he desired.

He was still a hundred yards from where he had last caught the vanishing flicker of white, when he noted a man walking his horse quietly along a woodland path among the undergrowth on the slope above him. The new comer was richly garbed in sharp contrast with the farmers Craig had encountered. As he caught sight of the hiding woman, the unknown uttered an exclamation of satisfaction and tying his horse to a tree, hurried toward her.

Uncertain how to act, Craig waited. Through the intervening shrubbery he could hear them conversing in tones so low that the words were unintelligible. Then he strode forward determined to demand the courtesy of a directing word that would lead him to Kennell Lodge.

But before he could reach the cedars, voices rose in angry protestation, the scream of a woman and the tumult of a quarrel followed. Craig broke through the shrubbery to face a tall, dark man, evidently of the quality, who was forcing his caresses on a frightened, protesting girl.

All the chivalry of his race quickened the pulse of the young surveyor, and brightened his eye with indignation. Not for a moment did he stop to parley; he struck without even a glance at the woman by his side.

The dark man staggered sideways, his hat went tumbling to the ground. Then he recovered his footing with an exclamation of astonishment. It was evidently the first intimation to him that there was a third party to the disgraceful scene.

For the infinitesimal fraction of a second the three stood apart, the girl with crimson cheeks and heaving bosom, her black hair tumbled about her shoulders, her eyes moist with tears of shame and anger, her red lips curling as if in scorn of the unwelcome kiss she had tried in vain to avoid.

In spite of the churlishness that had inspired his attempted familiarity with an unwilling and helpless woman,

it was immediately evident that the fellow was no physical coward. While Craig's blow had been of sufficient force to loosen the embrace and permit the girl to free herself, it was but the beginning of a fiercer struggle. His black eyes snapping, his countenance convulsed in fury, without a word the man flung himself on the surveyor.

It was no mean adversary, that Barclay Craig, in a strange land and among strange people, had so quickly made an enemy for life. With a sickening sensation, the surveyor felt a rain of blows that his guard was powerless to avert, and for a moment he was threatened with an overpowering dizziness. His knees bent and he staggered backwards. He had struck a churl and found a tartar.

Partly recovering himself, for a space Craig sparred for wind, parrying the continued attack and allowing his antagonist to exhaust himself in uncontrolled effort. Then his clear well-trained brain reasoned the chances of victory. He noted his opponent's weakness readily evident in his laboured breathing. In perfect physical condition himself, he guessed that by now the man before him had done his worst.

Then he became the aggressor. Side-stepping cautiously, feinting deftly, and guarding himself against a recurrence of the first wild onslaught, he advanced a few inches at a time to closer reach. Already the man's eye black and swollen, would carry the tale of the conflict far and wide. But Craig's blood was up; he wanted a greater revenge.

After a blow at his now thoroughly winded opponent's injured optic, he pressed upon him with relentless deliberation, as though choosing the right spot to strike. But that blow was never delivered. Instead like a flash his left arm shot through the other's guard to his body below the heart, with a thud that told its own story. The dark face turned ashy; the man tottered back, but as Craig pressed him close he sprang at the surveyor like an infuriated animal. His long arms grappled him in a bear-like grip, and together they clung—two strange men glar-

ing into each other's eyes, men who had never spoken word, nor knew each other's name.

In vain Craig tried to disentangle himself. From his antagonist there was now nothing more to fear; he had lost the power to strike another convincing blow. Locked together, they writhed and staggered. Wrenching one hand free, the unknown found his belt. Something glittered a moment; a keen blade hovered above his head and stopped midway.

The woman had flung herself on the uplifted arm, and while her weak grasp hardly stayed the blow, it brought an end to the conflict. For had the knife gone home it would not have drawn the blood of Barclay Craig, but would have buried itself in the bosom of the courageous girl.

"Who be ye—ye interfering whelp?" gasped the man, with the dirk, as the struggling group broke apart.

For a fleeting instant the three stood surveying one another each breathless and dishevelled. Craig was scornfully silent.

"'Tis a score to be settled wi' blood," snarled the other.

"When and where you please," retorted Craig. "Though it is loath I am to soil my hands with vermin such as you."

Once more personal conflict appeared imminent. The woman seemed about to faint, and Craig put forth his arm to sustain her.

"This man—is he your husband?" he questioned.

"Oh, no—no," she shuddered. "He is Allan Dhu, son of the Chief, the Laird of McNab, and I—I am Flora McIntyre. Are you a process-server, sir?" she asked.

"Oh, no—no," said Craig and smiled.

"Ye are a markid man—whoe'er ye be," declared Allan. "I'll settle wi' ye later," and the son of the Laird of McNab muttering curses, strode angrily away.

"A fig for your mouthings," Craig called after him. Then he turned to the girl.

"Tell me the way to Kennell Lodge, lassie."

"To Kennell—to Kennell Lodge!" repeated the girl in un-

easy, wondering tones, as her eyes scanned Craig's face and figure. Then finding something there that allayed her fears, she answered quickly:

"Ride back on the road by which you came, but turn to the left at the crossing, then through the village to the lake. Ye cannot well miss it—on the terraced hill above the landing."

Craig held out his hand and took the girl's trembling fingers in his. Wistful locks tumbled across her face, tanned by the sun, but merry and pert in spite of her recent discomfiture. The lips were full and pouting, the nose a bit uptilted, the chin pointed and dimpled. Great dark eyes of blue fringed with heavy black lashes, eyes that could look roguish or trustful, that could speak love or hate with equal force, looked sincerely into his.

"Accept my thanks, kind sir," she said, with the quiet grace of a gentlewoman. "Are you hurt?"

"Not at all—though willingly would I have been in such a cause," he replied.

With courtly grace, he raised her hand to his lips. She curtsied low with mocking smile. Again a horn sounded across the river, and in strange contrast to her previous mood, the girl turned and fled toward the village.

The surveyor sought his steed and rode through the still deserted street of the hamlet; but as his horse plodded on down the river road, the reins lay unheeded on the pommel of his saddle. He had forgotten alike the need for haste, the bruises of the conflict, and the sinister threats of Allan McNab. All his blood atingle he was smiling happily at the memory of the woodland nymph, whose hand he had kissed and whose tantalizing lips he already coveted.

As the mounted figure of Barclay Craig disappeared in the now darkening forest, a single long drawn blast from a dinner horn awoke the woodland echoes and the hamlet, all unconscious of the conflict that had occurred in the cedar copse, but a stone's throw away, awoke to life and activity. Doors flew wide, children ran shouting into the

open, men emerged from the shelter of buildings and as if by common consent converged toward the smithy door. The supposed process-server was gone.

"Na, na, he was no process-sarver. Did ye no note the fineness o' his garb," maintained a man, who towered head and shoulders above the rest.

A big man was John McIntyre—John "Mohr" McIntyre, as the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders of the Township called him in recognition of his size. Big was he, not only in the breadth of his shoulders, his great height; his large face, moulded in heroic lines, under the heavy thatch of iron-grey hair. Something more of bigness shone in the soul looking out from the large full blue eye—something of the calm immobility of the Scottish hills from which his race had sprung.

"Ye canna tell," responded James McFarlane, a little wizened man, with a sly twinkle in his eye. "'Twud be no unlike the auld fox at Kennell, to try to put us off our guard by sending a gay gallant wi' the papers. The Laird has the cunnin' o' the De'il himsal."

"Tuts, man," objected a stout, grey-bearded man. "Ye hae no call to talk in such a manner o' the Laird. For be he in the right or in the wrong, he is the Chief, the rightful chief o' the McNabs, and that none o' ye can gainsay."

As he whittled at a plug of black tobacco, his bearded jaw set defiantly. For a moment no one spoke. McIntyre was regarding the last speaker almost mournfully.

"Aye, Roddy, ye're right. The Laird's the Chief, and great in his power in the land. But there's aye One who is greater still and I hae faith He'll no desert the right. This is no the auld land, Michael Roddy, 'tis America. It canna gang on long as it hae done these six months past. Weel," he concluded, "I must get my lass and gang home. Come to my house the night and we will talk it over. Ye'll all be there?" he queried, as his masterful gaze swept the group.

Murmured assent from the bystanders and without

further comment the group at the smithy door broke up. As they disappeared, the blacksmith, who had been leaning against the stone-built forge, leisurely pumping the long handle of the bellows, grinned gleefully.

Short legged and massive bodied, the great width of his shoulders and the knotted heaps of muscle, visible below the roll of his upturned shirt sleeves, told of a giant's strength. His rugged, florid countenance, wide of jaw and liberally bespattered with freckles, was illumined by the winning and whimsical twist at one corner of his large good-natured mouth. Not a handsome face by any means was that of Murty McGonigal, but it was one into which women and children looked with intuitive trust and confidence. Just at present his bright, roguish, blue eyes under the tousled head of fiery red hair were big with glad anticipation.

"By Garrah—By Garrah," he soliloquized in a voice rich with the accents of old Erin, "'tis comin' at last—'tis comin'. 'Tis as harrud to move a Scotchman as it was for Finn McCool to push the Rock av Cullamore into the say. But when they onct gets goin'—Wurrah! Wurrah! but 'twill be a lovely fight. The Lord help the Laird when them hard-sowled Highlanders gets their dander up."

"Glory be," he chuckled, as he drew the glowing iron from the fire, "but 'twill be a scrupitious shindy—better than fightin' the land agents and excise men in Galway."

"And Murty McGonigal will be in it,—in it—in it," he repeated joyously as his mighty arm showered blow after blow on the sparkling metal.

CHAPTER II

"CURSE THE LAW AND CURSE THE LAIRD"

TEN years before the days of which these lines bear record, Archibald McNab, the titular chief of the Clan McNab, and the last living representative of the ancient House of Kennell, had left the hills and straths of his native Perthshire, to seek refuge in the Canadian woods, and there establish a new home for the few hundred faithful Highlanders who still clung to the fallen fortunes of their hereditary chief.

From the pliant governor of the Canadas, Sir Francis Bond Head, the Chief had but little difficulty in securing possession of a township of land eighteen miles square on the south bank of the upper Ottawa. There on the crest of a bold and terraced acclivity overlooking the lordly Lac des Chats, in all the silent grandeur of its primitive loneliness, the Chief built his new home and named it "Kennell Lodge" after the ancestral seat of his fathers in the old land.

A few hundred yards to the south, the noisy Madawaska poured its spring floods into the peaceful bosom of the Ottawa, as yet unfurrowed by any craft, save the bark canoe of the Indian and fur-trader, and the bateau of the lumberman. Beyond its blue expanse to the north, miles of endless pine forests lifted away to the low ridge of the Laurentian hills and the untrodden wilderness of James Bay.

To the west of Kennell Lodge, and about the little hamlet of Arnprior, near the mouth of the Madawaska, the men who had followed their chief to the new land, even as their grandfathers had followed his grandsire to the fatal field

of Culloden, were busy hewing out of the interminable forest homes for themselves and their posterity. Not only McNabs of that ilk were they, but McIntyres, McPhersons, McFarlanes, McDonalds, and other of various patronymics, whose fathers in the breaking up of the clans after Culloden, had by reason of intermarriage, pledged their fealty to the father of the present chief. By the banks of the brawling Madawaska, along the shores of the purling Dochart, the rude log cabins with their massive stone chimneys grew year by year more numerous. Year by year the stump-dotted clearings grew wider, and the rent tribute of “one bushel of grain per cleared acre” grew greater and greater, filling the storehouses of the Laird of McNab full to overflowing.

The Chief's private estate, Olympian in its magnitude, stretched along the lake front, from the mouth of the Madawaska to the rocky shores of Black Point. His were the mild eyed deer, that amid the stately pines about Kennell Lodge raised their antlered heads to gaze unafraid at the passer-by. His, too, were the booms of logs and the mighty rafts of hewn timber that year by year floated idly down the lake to their haven in far-off Quebec. The dream of the McNab had come true. The Chief of the ancient clan, once fallen from his high estate, bid fair to win once again to place and power.

While at home in Kennell Lodge, the Chief sat in state as lord of the manor and patriarch of the clan, his gigantic form, clad always in the romantic and picturesque garb of the Highlands, was a frequent and familiar figure on the streets of Montreal and York (as Toronto was known in those days). Tall, broad-shouldered and erect, a giant in strength and stature, in spite of his fifty years, the McNab ever bore himself with a proud consciousness of the prestige which clung to one of ancient and honourable lineage.

Eagerly the gossips of the two capitals spread the somewhat exaggerated tidings of his wealth, of his ever growing rent-roll, and the faithful and romantic devotion of

his clansmen. The semi-annual visits of the McNab to York and Montreal occasioned social events of no slight importance. His lavish prodigality, his charming personality, the brilliancy of the banquets at which he entertained, and was entertained by colonial celebrities, the spirit of the time thought but worthy of a generous and whole-souled Highland laird. Even the settlers themselves tacitly approved of a course which heralded to the world the prosperity of the grant and the greatness of the Clan McNab.

By what right the Laird held the broad acres of his forest domain, by what title he took toll from their yearly toil, the clansmen had never thought to ask. Was he not their chief, whose enterprise and generosity had brought them from a land where the hopeless lot of a crofter had overtaken them. Gladly had they given him a note for the amount of their passage money to be paid at any time within ten years. Men who had been wont to see, in the old land, a score of pounds paid for a single acre, were but little likely to cavil at the apparent nominal rent of "one bushel per acre." Around them was the unbroken forest, where in good time their sons as well, could carve out homes for themselves and their children. Rude and harsh as was the life in those pioneer days, a life of unending toil, alike during the short, hot Canadian summer and long, dreary winter, they wrought patiently, with faith in themselves and the future, facing all the vicissitudes of life with the incessant industry and stolid sternness of their Caledonian ancestry.

No mailed baron of the middle ages, no prince of the Bourbon or Hapsburg line, believed more firmly or more sincerely in the divine origin and eternal permanency of his hereditary prerogatives than the Chief of the Clan McNab. Himself, he saw as the last of a long line of heroic chieftains. Even as they, in the days of the past, had led the clansmen to many a bloody battlefield, so would he, the McNab of the modern time, lead these, his kinsmen, into the coming days of peace and plenty.

Insistent as he was upon his hereditary privileges, the Chief was by no means forgetful of his duties. More than one of the clansmen, caught fast in the grip of the law, had him to thank for their freedom or a mitigated sentence. Big Colin McDonald, who with one blow of his mighty fist had killed a French Canadian river-man, had escaped with a few years imprisonment, and Alastar McNab, falsely accused of theft by a Bytown merchant, had been successfully defended 'by a lawyer brought from Montreal at the expense of the Chief.

To the first settlers it had been somewhat of a shock when they learned that all the timber on their lots except that needed for the construction of their farm buildings was still the property of the Chief, though the written leases,—leases which stipulated a rent of “one bushel of grain per year, per acre, to me and my successors in the chieftaincy of the Clan McNab” made no mention of the timber. On this score but one man had defied the Laird, and the offender, Alex Miller, was now a hunted fugitive, wandering no man knew where.

To the Laird's mediæval mind, Miller's offence was unforgiveable disloyalty, and he believed that it was his plain duty to the clan, no less than to himself, to punish severely, not only Miller, but also those of the clansmen who openly sympathised with him. That the Chief was a magistrate as well as the landlord of the township placed him in a position where it was comparatively easy to carry out his purpose.

It was of the fugitive Miller that Michael Roddy was speaking to the score of settlers who were gathered at the home of John Mohr McIntyre.

“He did wrong in the beginning—the man Miller did, in selling the timber. The timber belongs to the Laird.”

“How ken ye that, Michael Roddy,” came the slow voice of John McIntyre. “No word o' the timber is there in the leases.”

“Do ye doubt the word o' the Chief,” demanded Sandy

Fisher, the incredulity in his tone bordering on anger. He was an old man with a flowing patriarchal beard.

"Then," argued McIntyre in his deliberate way, "why did'na he hae Miller arrested for sellin' the logs? The truth was he dare na."

"Still more wrong was it for Miller to quit the grant after the Laird had said him nay," persisted Roddy.

"Tuts, man," remarked James McFarlane. "The poor lad could'na hae stayed and seen his bairns starve. Naught was there in the house but potatoes, and little enough o' them—that too wi' winter coming on."

McFarlane was a keen-eyed little man, of a humorous turn of mind, but with a due allowance of Scotch stubbornness. He and McIntyre were considered by the Chief fully as disloyal as the fugitive Miller.

As McIntyre had indicated, the McNab had not pressed the matter of the timber. Miller, though firm in his belief, that he was standing on his rights, was yet willing to render his Chief all due deference. Following the ancient custom, he had repaired to Kennell Lodge and asked of the Chief permission to leave the grant in search of work. The request had been haughtily refused. Miller, however, had no choice. His crops that year had been destroyed by a forest fire. Only a few days had he been at work in the neighbouring township of Fitzroy, when a constable armed with a warrant signed by the Chief as magistrate, arrested him and brought him to Kennell Lodge.

"Ye wull find, my man, that ye canna disobey your lawful superiors," the Chief remarked, as he made out the commitment papers charging Miller with intending to leave the country while still owing a sum of money to McNab of McNab.

For two months, Miller lay in gaol at Perth, seventy miles from his home, fed by the charity of the sheriff. McIntyre and McFarlane, hearing of his plight, went his bail and secured his release. The day set for his trial came, but Miller, detained by bad roads and the heavy spring rains, did not appear until the following day only to learn that

the case had gone against him by default, that he himself had been heavily fined for contempt of court, and that the Chief who had been forced to pay the bonds himself had immediately secured judgment against McIntyre and McFarlane for the amounts. Terrified by these convincing evidences of the power of McNab, Miller had left the country for parts unknown.

“’Twas no wise, McIntyre and McFarlane to hae signed the lad’s bonds. ’Tis o’ no avail to fight the Laird. He is a great man among the great ones o’ the land. Agin I say it, Miller shudna hae gone,” insisted Roddy, wagging his bearded chin emphatically.

“The De’il take it,” broke in a young impatient voice, the voice of Peter, John McIntyre’s stripling son. “Now, why should any freeborn man beg permission from the McNab? Be we serfs, that all our comings and gaeins are under the eye o’ the Laird?”

Peter was a falcon-faced fellow of twenty years, with wavy black hair and blue eyes. In the curve of his clear cut lips and the set of his sharp chin, showed something of the insolence of a spoiled child and the dauntlessness of a race of mountain men. His was a face of heroic intensity, betokening a will, masterful for good if he might, for evil if he must.

“It has aye been so, a guid clansman should pay his Chief the courtesy o’ axin him when he is goin’ awa,” maintained Roddy.

The young man’s eyes snapped; his smile was contemptuous.

“A curse on the auld ways,” he retorted. “Wull they clear a fallow, or feed a hungry baby?” It was the voice of youth, that will ever be served, decrying the wisdom of age.

Sandy Fisher lowered his head and gazed over his square horn-rimmed spectacles almost sorrowfully at the young man.

“Ye be a fine lad, Peter,—but still a lad. More caution and respect for your elders would better become your

years. There be three things any decent man respects: God, the King and the Chief."

"Law is a bad business for poor folks, as we be," grumbled Roddy. "We canna fight the great. We shudna be like the poor fools o' the Forty-five."

"Michael Roddy," John Mohr McIntyre's voice was vibrant with indignation. "No man under my roof may speak wi' disrespect o' the men who fought for the Bonnie Prince. Guard yer tongue, man."

"Good,—good!" the chorus of commendation was emphatic but undemonstrative. For still dear to the hearts of the Highlanders of McNab was the memory of the gallant young prince for whom their fathers had fought and suffered.

"But Roddy is right, John Mohr," old man Fisher asserted boldly. "I would gang both o' ye to the Chief, and very humbly ax his pardon. He's no small-hearted, the Chief. He'll give ye time to pay the bonds. Ye canna fight him. For six months noo, ye and Jeems here hae been dodging the process-servers, and in the end, they wull clap the blister on ye both. The law and the Chief and the Government are all agin ye."

"We-e-e-ll," drawled McFarlane, with a dry grin. "They hae no clapped any blister on me yet. And I'll no ax the Chief's pardon."

"Curse your law, Roddy," burst out Alex Stewart, a fair-faced young man of nineteen. "Was it no the law that has made ye, McFarlane, and ye, John Mohr, live in fear and trembling? Curse——"

"Laddie—laddie," the soothing voice of John McIntyre cut short the boy's outburst. "Curse not at all. Curses like chickens hae aye a fashion o' coming home to roost."

But Stewart would not be restrained. Rising to his feet he retorted defiantly:

"Aye, I wull say it. Curse the law and curse the Laird. 'Tis but for the great the law stands. Does not the Chief take from our lands the timber wi' out a scratch o' a pen to show that 'tis his?"

“He wull no let the pathmasters build the bridge across the Madawaska at Burnstown, wi’ the improvement money from York. He says it is to be spent on the road to Allan Dhu’s clearing at White Lake. Has he no refused to take the day-labor o’ McIntyre and McFarlane’s sons in lieu o’ rent, though the lease says he shall do so? The man is a tyrant, ’tis time——”

“God save all here,” cried a cheery voice, as the door was flung wide open.

Murty McGonigal, the blacksmith, stepped across the threshold. As his laughing blue eyes ranged around the room, at the flickering flames in the wide open hearth and the half-concealed figures of the men seated in the shadows, he grinned broadly.

“Conspiring agin yer Chafe, are ye?” he chuckled. “Wurrah! Wurrah! ’tis meself that thanks the Lord that the Irish have no chafes. ’Tis the wan good thing the bloody Sassanach did for us,—kilt them all.”

The Scotchmen smiled indulgently. McGonigal was a privileged character; his rollicking ways were well known in the grant.

Rising from the fire-place where he had bent for a moment seeking a coal for his pipe, Murty caught sight of young Peter McIntyre, who stood with arms folded leaning against the wall.

“Oh! Pater—now that remoids me,” began Murty, as he thrust his hand into his blanket coat, “Shure I have a letther for ye. ’Tis from the Ould Tarrier himself” (Murty always referred to the Chief as the “Ould Tarrier”). “Sorra the good can it contain fer ’twas that Devil’s egg-bag MacTavish asked me to bring it.”

As Peter knelt on one knee in front of the hearth to peruse the missive, his sharp features, lit by the ruddy glow, filled with sudden indignation and his fine, dark eyes widened in amazement.

“Noo, harken friends, to this. The Chief accuses me o’ treason.” In a voice trembling with exasperation, he read:

KENNEL LODGE, May 27, 1837.

Peter McIntyre.

DEGRADED CLANSMAN:

You are accused to me by Sir George Colborne, of libel, sedition and High Treason. You will forthwith appear before me at my house of Kennell and there make submission. And if you show a contrite and repentant spirit and confess your fault against me, your legitimate chief, and your crime against Her Majesty Queen Victoria, I will intercede for your pardon.

Your offended Chief,
McNAB.

In the room was a deep and portentous silence. Save perhaps Murty McGonigal, not a man but realised the seriousness of the accusation. For the last three years the Canadas had been rife with agitation and discontent. Rumours had reached the grant of the struggle that the Reformers in the Parliaments of the two provinces had been waging against the tyranny of Sir Francis Bond Head, and the mal-administration of the group of aristocratic families in whose hands the government lay—the Joneses, the Sherwoods, the MacCauleys and the Hagermans, all closely connected by marriage and consanguinity and known to their opponents as the “Family Compact.”

That the leaders of the Reformers had in their bitterness threatened armed resistance to the authorities, that they had been denounced by the government press as rebels, traitors, and malcontents, and that several of them were now behind prison bars, were facts well known even to these settlers in the backwoods of the Ottawa valley.

To these expatriated Highlanders, many of whose grandfathers had died on the scaffold, the very word “treason” was fraught with fateful significance. They all knew the fiery spirit of Peter McIntyre. Was it not possible that some of his hasty words had reached the ears of the Chief? Possibly Peter himself was in league with the leaders of the Reformers, Papineau and MacKenzie. In John McIntyre’s troubled eyes, as he gazed anxiously at his son, was an unspoken question.

“On my word,” said Peter slowly. “I ken naught o’ what

he means. No word hae I said agin the Queen or the Government.”

“Ye hae clashit agin the Laird, and he is the Chief o’ the Clan McNab. That ye can no deny,” said Roddy regretfully. To his mind, it was much the same thing.

Peter sprang to his feet, the letter crumpled in his fist. His defiant voice rang out.

“Agin the Chief and his ways, I hae spoke and I wull. But I wull gie the lie in the teeth o’ any man that calls me traitor or rebel.”

Murty McGonigal, his short clay pipe uptilted in his mouth, had been watching Peter, delight dancing in his eyes. Suddenly he said:

“Be aisy, bye—be aisy. ’Tis meself that can somewhat explain this letther. I come up with old Duncan Cameron in Han’s grog shop in the village this afternoon, and he tould me the hull business. Some one has writ a letther to the governor saying harrud things agin the government and agin the Ould Tarrier, with no name signed to it at all—at all. And the Governor’s secretary, av course, sent it to the Chafe, and when the Ould Tarrier gets it he swore like a fishwife, and he shows it to Cameron and Allan Dhu. And Allan, bad cess to his dirty sowl, then and there put the notion into the Chafe’s head that it was one av the McIntyres that writ it. And sez the Chafe: ‘’Twas no John that did it, ’twas his brat Peter.’ ’Tis plain he thinks ye wrote it, bye.”

Peter’s face flushed with sudden passion.

“Then ’tis the doin’ o’ that De’il’s spawn o’ the Chief’s, Allan Dhu, the black-hearted villain. ’Tis all part o’ the same plot. Ye, father, be a hunted man, and now, I am called traitor. Oh! Ye make me shamed at heart o’ my Scottish blood.” His voice rose to an impassioned scream. “Our fathers kenned well how to deal wi’ such tyrants in the days ago, and even the frog-eating Frenchmen would no stand the tyrant King Louis. But here ye set, night after night, haverin’ and bletherin’ about the rights o’ the Chief.”

"And that black-faced son o' his, Allan Dhu—there's no a comely woman in the grant safe from the wolf. Ye talk o' the law. What law is there for poor saft-witted Maggie MacIntosh as she sits wi' the brat o' Allan Dhu on her knee, dreaming, the poor daft creature, that she be his wife by word o' mouth as in the auld land. Had we but the spirit o' the wild rabbit o' the woods, Allan Dhu would hae had a bullet in his dirty heart, long syne."

"Keep yersal in hand, son; talk not of violence."

"Violence, aye," he roared, "I wull talk o' violence, for by God, if this be the work o' Allan Dhu," he held out the crumpled letter in his quivering fist, "I'll make him eat his words or he'll die by my own hand."

So saying, he strode out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

The men seated about the fire, shocked by the intensity of the lad's threat, sat upright staring at one another in consternation. Fisher pursed his lips deprecatingly. Roddy was shaking his head in despair. Even Murty hurried to the door and looked into the moonlight.

"'Tis all right," he announced as he resumed his seat. "He is talkin' to the colleen Flora be the fence."

"Big brother," the girl was saying as she clasped his arm affectionately and looked up into his clouded countenance. "What a mighty frown—don't—'twill spoil your beauty. When you frown like that," she continued, "you look like Allan Dhu did to-day——"

She checked herself suddenly. To no one had she spoken of the events of the evening.

"The day—the day. Ye spoke wi' Allan Dhu the day. When and where?" demanded Peter.

Flora hesitated. She knew the hot temper of her brother, but there was that in his face which brooked no refusal. Briefly she told how while visiting a friend in the Flat Rapid settlement she had heard the warning signals—of her attempt to conceal herself from the supposed process-server and Allan's sudden appearance.

"And Allan Dhu, what said he to ye?" demanded Peter.

Flora hid her face in her hands.

"Promise me, laddie," she implored, "that you will not mention this to father or mother. They have trouble enough as it is."

"I promise."

"He tried to kiss me and I slapped his face. He wanted me to——"

Flora's face reddened.

"Gang on, lassie," the man's voice was hoarse, his face pale.

"He wanted me to go away with him to Montreal."

"God-God," gasped Peter.

"Peter, Peter," pleaded the girl, awed by the cold silent fury in her brother's face.

"Listen laddie, he got his deserts." As she told the story of the stranger's intervention, of his defence of her, and the discomfiture of Allan, the brother's brow knotted in perplexity.

"The man thrashit him, ye say—thrashit Allan Dhu," he repeated wonderingly, "and him axin the road to Kennell. Who the De'il can he be?"

"He's not a process-server, that much I could see. His dress and bearing was that of a gentleman."

Her bowed head hid her blushes, as she recalled the stranger's admiring glances. Even now her palm was tingling where his lips had pressed it.

"Gang now, lass, gang into the house. I must think a bit," ordered the brother.

For nearly half an hour Peter stood leaning on the rail-fence, absorbed in his bitter thoughts. That Allan Dhu had designs on his sister, he had long suspected. Since the day some months ago at a fair, when he had seen the bold lecherous eyes of the Laird's son appraising the flower-like beauty of the girl, and had heard later of his muttered lustful comment, he had regarded the son of the Chief with an intense and unbounded hatred. But a few hours ago had come to him a tale of how Allan Dhu in his cups had boasted of his determination to possess the daughter of

the McIntyres. Flora's story of the happenings of the day but confirmed his suspicions.

It was but a matter of time, he feared, till the necessary legal papers would be served on his father. To meet the cash payment of the bonds was impossible, and his father's imprisonment would certainly follow. If this charge of treason contained in the Laird's letter, false as it was, were pressed, it would, at least for a time, result in his own incarceration. Then bereft of her natural protectors, and subject to the dangers of Allan Dhu's machinations, his sister might disappear, even be kidnapped bodily with no man's hand or voice raised in her defence.

The lad brought his fist down on the fence rail with a muttered oath. Then he walked quickly to the stable, led out a saddled horse, and galloped down the road towards Arnprior. Concealed beneath his clothing were a pair of pistols.

He had formed a desperate plan. Allan, he knew, at this hour would be probably found in one of the grog shops of the village. It was his purpose to waylay him on his road home to Kennell and taunt him into acceptance of the hazard of a duel. Master of the pistol himself, he had little fear of the outcome.

As he slowed his panting horse on the crest of a rise, his gaze turned involuntarily to the right, where a cabin loomed dark amid the pines. Through the moonlit stillness swept a soft whisper.

"Peter."

A woman stood at the barred gate.

Slipping from his saddle, he strode to the fence and threw his arms about the girl, kissing again and again the lips uplifted to meet his.

"I hae been sore fashed about ye, Peter," she whispered. "The night I cudna sleep. I hae had ye in my thoughts all day."

Her great grey eyes searched his intently as if she would read his very soul. In Ellen McPherson's fair, cameo-like face, framed in its aureole of shining yellow hair, was

none of the traditional coquetry of her sex, but the sober yet sweet winsomeness of premature dignity.

Far from smooth had been the courtship of Peter McIntyre and Ellen McPherson. Some weeks ago, her father, one of the Chief's most loyal supporters, fearful of incurring the hostility of the Laird, and displeased by the elder McIntyre's successful evasion of the process-servers, had ordered Peter from his house.

Sensing something momentous in the unaccustomed grimness of her lover's face, the girl started.

"Peter, laddie, what's fashin' ye now?"

The man smothered a groan, and drew her closer. Suddenly she stood away from him: then her enquiring fingers swept the front of his jacket.

"Pistols—pistols. Now what hae ye done, lad?" she asked, a tremor of fear in her voice.

The emotional transition from furious rage to a softer feeling had left the lad trembling like a leaf. Surely, slowly, his determination was oozing away.

"I hae done nothing—yet," he stammered.

"And for whom were the pistols—a process-sarver—the Laird—Allan Dhu?"

"For Allan Dhu, the scunnerl."

"Oh! Peter, Peter. That hothead o' yours wud heap more woe on your feyther and your mother and Flora—and masel. Ye must keep out o' trouble, for if your father is taken, who is to fend for your women folk. Promise me, lad, that ye wull gang straight home—promise me."

"Take yer hands off my lass, Peter McIntyre," a stern masculine voice bawled out in disagreeable harshness. "'Tis shame indeed to me that a daughter o' mine should steal from her bed to be fondled ower a gate by the son o' a gaolbird."

Unheeding, the girl still clung to him, whispering imploringly,

"Promise me, ye wull gang straight home—promise me."

Peter nodded. A quick touch of her lips to his and she stepped deftly aside to avoid her father's outstretched hand.

Then drawing the shawl closer about her the girl walked quietly towards the house.

For some seconds the two men, the bars between them, stood glaring defiance into one another's eyes. Peter was the first to speak.

"Weel ye ken, Fergus McPherson," he said, with one foot in the stirrup, "that the father o' Ellen is safe from hand or blow o' mine. Else would I take that stick from ye and break it across your back."

"Hoot, ye whelp, gang on now, and no let me catch ye hanging about my lass again," McPherson called after him, as he cantered away in the direction of the Flat Rapids.

"Your bark's worse nor your bite," flung back Peter, unawed by the parent's threat.

When McIntyre had disappeared beyond a turn in the road something akin to a grim smile hovered over the hard features of Fergus McPherson.

"I'm damned now," he muttered to himself, "if yon is no a fine lad. If it wasna for his father—the auld rebellious fool——"

Shaking his head sadly, he turned toward the house.

CHAPTER III

A CHIEFTAIN OF THE WILDS

BEFORE the great, wide-open hearth of Kennell Lodge sat the Laird of McNab, attired in the green and red tartan kilt of his family.

In any land, at any period of the world's history, Archibald McNab would have been a striking and distinguished figure. The bold blue eye now gazing moodily into the dancing flames, the broad brow, the high arched nose, the lofty poise of his haughty head, each and every feature was stamped with the conscious pride of blood and race. His whole appearance bespoke the man of masterful purpose and comprehensive enterprise.

Nearby sat a withered scrap of humanity, Alex MacTavish, his counsellor and chancellor of his exchequer, before him an array of parchments and ledgers.

"Hae ye taken the count o' Sandy McNab's timber, MacTavish?" inquired the Laird, without even turning his head.

"Aye, aye," responded MacTavish. "I hae that. Twelve thousand feet o' logs, and twelve thousand feet o' hewn pine. They 'ull be down to the mouth o' the Madawaska in about a month. A verra industrious man is Sandy. The check came the day from Quebec for the last raft o' timber, sixteen hundred pound, fifteen shilling an' sixpence. Sixteen hundred pound—sixteen hundred pound," he repeated as if the syllables themselves were morsels sweet to the taste. He was wringing his hands with unctuous satisfaction.

Not one grey hair marred the inky black, tonsured head of Alexander MacTavish. It was the Chancellor's boast

that the men of his family never showed the snows of age. His voice was rasping and vicious; his laughter, a sorry wheeze. Toothless, his mouth closed like a mouse trap, and his merciless talon-like fingers ever entwined one another in snake-like writhings. His sunken grey eye, though keen and cunning, looked no man in the face but shifted nervously before a straightforward gaze.

From a fawning clerk behind the counter of Dugald Anderson the Chief's storekeeper, he had risen in the favour of the Chief, till he was now his private secretary and virtually manager of his vast estate. It was the merciless policies of MacTavish as mirrored in the edicts of the Chief that were responsible for many of the mutterings of discontent among the clansmen. But to the Laird he had proven a fairy godfather, for without his astute management, the McNab, constitutionally improvident, would never have found ready money for his ostentatious displays of extravagance in the cities of the colony.

In the presence of the Chief, MacTavish revelled in crafty obsequiousness; with the settlers in meaningless protestations of interest in the public weal. Verbal chatter and magnanimous desires he cast about him extravagantly, but to every test he turned an ear complacently deaf. Wife nor child he had none, nor had his withered old heart ever felt their lack.

Some legal lore he had, but as the Chief was a law unto himself, it was the counsellor and not the advocate he required. MacTavish claimed the ability to plead a case in Latin, should need be,—a statement which none could safely question, save mild old Father Dontigny at Quyon. His bent form, easily past the scriptural allotment of years, was a fantastic and familiar figure in the grant, as wrapped in an all-enveloping cloak he nosed about from house to house, from clearing to clearing, ever seeking a morsel of news which he might carry to the ears of his liege lord. With him he always carried the barrister's green bag in the unspoken belief that it added to his prestige in the eyes of the clansmen.

"Hae ye heard aught o' that scunnerl Miller lately?" inquired the Chief.

"Aye," wheezed the Chancellor. "'Tis said that he is in the States. I hae news from the Clerk o' the Coort o' Sessions at Perth. He is sending his best man, one Wiseman, wi' the papers to serve on McFarlane and McIntyre. A fine foxy lad is Wiseman. He'll sarve them if any one can. He plans to catch them o' night in their beds."

"Send him fifty pounds, if he succeeds in landing they two in Perth Jail. 'Twill put the fear o' the law into the hearts o' the other black sheep, when they two are lookin' out from ahint the bars. And Jeems Youill—has he come in wi' his rent?"

"He hasna—he axes for more time—the shiftless loon."

"Take a lien on his cows, and give him two months more," ordered the Chief.

Footsteps resounding in the corridor, and a not unmelodious voice sang:

"To the Lairds o' Convention 'twas Claverhouse spoke,
Ere the King's crown gang down there be crowns to be broke."

"Heuch, ye're sober the night, Duncan, for a wonder," said the Chief, with a half-amused, half contemptuous glance at the newcomer.

"More's the pity," replied Duncan, as he filled his pipe from the Chief's own tobacco jar.

Deep-furrowed and weatherbeaten was the face of Duncan Cameron, a face that had looked on sixty years of wild life in two continents. It was striking in its virility, for age had not dimmed the fire in his eye, deep-set and searching in his shaggy head. His red beard formed a fringed circle beneath his chin; his tam-o'shanter rakishly topped his tousled sandy locks and his woollen jersey ensconced a still sturdy form. A tasty old vagabond at his worse, was Duncan Cameron; about him still lingered something of the jaunty grace of his mis-spent youth. The mild-mannered clansmen of the grant as they listened

to him singing a backwoods "Come-all-ye" or an old-time Jacobite ballad, could easily credit his boast that in his youth, he had been a "Deil among the lassies."

Naturally endowed with noble impulses and lofty purposes, he forfeited them only in his cups, which, alas, were so continuous that the real Duncan was seldom in evidence. His waning favor with the Chief, for whom he had sacrificed home, friends and native land, weighed heavily on him in his old age, and he recalled with longing sorrow his youth in the old land, where he and the Laird had been the boon companions of many a merry escapade.

From being major-domo of the Chief's mansion, his position had gradually shifted to that of an inconsequent dependent, and Ian McCuan, the Chief's chamberlain, who once courted his favour and jumped at his word of command, now glanced askance at him as he smoked many a solitary pipe before the hearth of Kennell Lodge.

At times the Chief warmed to him again, and the two hunted and rode as in their garish days, but at each sign of returning favour, Cameron's mercurial spirits rose, and in jubilation he sought the tankard. Then the Chief, disgusted and annoyed by his unreliability, again frowned upon him and turned more and more to the ever dependable MacTavish. Then Duncan, stung by the Laird's coldness, sought a grogshop in the village and consorted with any one who had the buyings of a dram. His loyal, generous heart became, under the spell of drink, brooding, vindictive and revengeful.

It was in one of these moments that he had written the anonymous letter to the Governor at York—an act which he sincerely regretted as soon as he returned to his senses—all the more that it had unexpectedly involved the McIntyres, for whom he had a kindly feeling. Cameron's wandering eyes chanced to fall on the wizened figure of MacTavish brooding over his papers, and they glowed with the fires of hate.

"Man, man, MacTavish," he jeered, "ye'll brak' yer health workin' so late."

Ignoring the sarcasm, the Chancellor replied evenly :

"Mebbe—mebbe. But the good servant doesna hear the clock strike the hours. He has aye his reward in the trust and confidence o' his master—like yersal—like yersal, my dear Duncan."

It was a shaft that shot home. Cameron's face flamed with rage.

The Chief smiled. The two, he knew full well, hated each other—a hatred born of their rivalry for his favour and he listened to their many verbal bouts with unconcealed amusement. But the dissipated old Duncan, in spite of his ready flow of Scotch wit, was but seldom able to cope with the Chancellor's biting jibes at his own shortcomings.

"What hae ye in that green bag, MacTavish," queried Cameron, in a tone almost amiable.

"Papers and sic-like."

"Murty McGonigal, the smith, swears 'tis a papist crucifix ye carry there."

"Noo, why the De'il should I be carryin' a papist crucifix?" demanded the Chancellor peevishly.

"McGonigal says 'tis to keep Auld Nick from flying away wi' his own," chuckled Cameron.

The Laird rested his head on the back of his chair and laughed outright.

"Weel-hit—Duncan, my man, weel-hit."

Cameron grinned with pride at the compliment. The Chancellor was about to formulate some sneering response when old Ian McCuan, the Chief's chamberlain, ushered Barclay Craig into the room.

"Is this Mister McNab?" he asked, as he drew off his gloves.

The Laird rose to his feet.

"Mister me no misters," was the haughty response. "I am THE McNAB. You hae come far—else ye'd ken."

"I crave your pardon, sir." Craig's head was erect, his levelled gaze meeting the Chief's fairly. There was courtesy but no obsequiousness in his bearing. "I am Barclay Craig of the Craigs of Strathdon."

"Ah-h-h. The Craigs o' Strathdon—a good auld family. I hae heard tell o' them." Something of deference was manifest in the words and manner of the Chief.

"Be seated, sir, I bid ye welcome to Kennell Lodge. Ye must stay the night and longer if ye wull. It is the boast o' the McNabs for centuries, that a traveller can aye find their doors open, and a place by their hearth. Do ye travel far, Mr. Craig?"

For answer, Craig handed him a letter.

"Ah-h-h! the surveyor. Good—good," he ejaculated, as he completed its perusal and extended his hand. "My friend Curtis speaks verra highly o' ye. There's muckle to be done, but take your time—take your time. Ye must rest a day or two, and then we'll talk o' the work. There's two thousand acres to be laid out in settlers lots in the North Bush."

"McCuan," he called, "look ye to the lad's togs, and prepare the north chamber, then fetch another bowl o' grog, and make haste. MacTavish, this is our surveyor, Barclay Craig, a lad from Strathdon. MacTavish is my barrister and chancellor. Ye'll hae muckle to do wi' one another. And this"—he added, waving his hand towards Cameron, "is Duncan Cameron, my"—he hesitated for a moment and then added, "o' my household."

MacTavish looked triumphantly at Duncan. The difference in their position was unconsciously but clearly contrasted by the Chief's words.

"Ye hae dined," queried the Chief.

"My thanks to you—yes. Being uncertain of my destination I accepted the hospitality of a young Frenchman a few miles back."

"Narcisse—the hewer," commented the Chief. "Return later, Mr. Craig, and join us in a wee dram," he added cordially.

McCuan led the way with a taper. As they passed down the wide draughty corridor, the candle suddenly flickered low and blue. A cloaked female form moved silently toward them but the older man did not see it until it was

past. Then, with a gasp, he caught Craig's arm and dropped the light. They were now in inky darkness.

"My God—did ye no see it?" gasped the chamberlain, his voice trembling with terror.

"Some one passed," said Craig lightly. "A servant, was it not?"

But the old man stood apparently speechless, while Craig fumbling on the floor recovered the candle and relit it.

"Lord presarve us," moaned McCuan, when they reached the north chamber. "'Twas the Dark Lady."

"Aye," he whimpered, in abject fear, "the Dark Lady—the spectre o' the McNabs. Ill-fortune and calamity it means for the Laird. She has no been seen since the night afore the Laird lost his lands at home. Afore Culloden she came to the grandfather o' the Chief and he died a year aifter at Carlisle wi' a rope about his neck, but like a brave man and a McNab, and noo—God help us all,—she comes wi' a message o' warnin' to his grandson."

Servants entering with Craig's luggage, water and firewood precluded further conversation, but as the aged chamberlain left the room, his face was ashen with fear, his steps slow and uncertain.

When Craig returned to the spacious living-room fresh after his ablutions and a change of raiment, the trio of aged Scots were absorbed in debate. Each held a glass of grog, kept continuously replenished with a ladle from the great earthenware bowl on the table. Cameron had grown more facetious and familiar, MacTavish more emphatic and insolent, and the Chief seemed to have taken on a more kingly air. The McNab filled Craig's glass, and the tired traveller drank deep of the fiery fluid, with evident relish.

They were discussing the deer hunt of yesterday, when the door swung open and Allan Dhu McNab strode into the room. Casting his riding whip on the Chancellor's papers, he dropped into a chair without a word of welcome. Then he started up in amazement as his eye lit on Barclay Craig, seated in close converse with his father. For a moment he glared at him malignantly and seemed about to

speak, but the utter lack of recognition in the surveyor's cool stare daunted him and he decided that silence was the wiser part. Taking one of the long churchwarden clay pipes from the hearth-shelf, he filled and lighted it and stood with his back to the flames moodily scanning the company.

Almost faultless in form and line, save for the fullness of the heavy jaw was the face of Allan Dhu McNab. His raven black hair, olive complexion, and darkly brilliant eyes told of some strain of ancient Pictish blood. All the pride of a McNab showed in the insolence of his haughty mouth and the carriage of his shaggy head. Already in his yet youthful face, dissipation had set its searing marks. Handsome he would always be, even in age, but a sinister expression born of constantly gratified passion, marred what would have otherwise been a winning countenance, and gave a cast to an eye which might have been noble.

For Allan had spared neither himself nor his friends in his self-gratification. He had wrung his father's proud heart with his misdeeds and his extravagances, and in Montreal, where he spent half of his time, he was hopelessly in debt. There, his escapades among the demi-monde and the fastest young bloods of the city were current gossip.

Though his father, it is true, was one of the city's most lavish entertainers, the Laird's extravagances had at least the merit of dignity, and were marked by an ostentation well calculated to herald to the world the growing wealth of the township and the progress of the clan. But for Allan Dhu, there were shakings of the head and muttered curses. His immoralities, even at home, were the scandal of the township.

The McNab glancing up caught sight of his son's discoloured brow.

"What blacked your eye, lad?" he inquired.

Allan stepped over to the table, filled a glass and replied carelessly.

"A fall from my horse."

The falsehood dropped glibly from his lips. If this

unknown stranger was minded to keep silence, Allan was willing to meet him halfway. He had no desire that the story of the fracas should be known to his father.

The Chief arose and looked at him searchingly.

"Allan, ye lie. Yon blackened brow comes only from a dunt wi' a fist. Ye hae been fighting, sir,—fighting wi' yer fists like a common riverman. Brulzein' in some grog-shop, I'll warrant. Damnation! can ye no larn the ways o' a gentleman? Ye hae no respect for yersal or the name o' McNab."

"Faugh!"—there was utter disgust in the snort of the Chief—"fighting wi' yer fists. Give me the tale—who hit ye sic a dunt?"

"There he sits." Allan waved his hand contemptuously toward Craig.

"Explain, Mr. Craig." Something of menace was evident in the Chief's manner.

"Let the young man speak for himself, sir. I owe no one apologies or explanations." Craig's tone was even, his face unruffled. Allan stood silent, smoking nervously.

"Allan," roared the Laird, "give me the truth, or I'll shake ye till yer teeth rattle in your head. Auld as I be, I can do it e'en yet and that ye ken full weel."

"I tried to kiss a lassie—he interfered—we fought."

Tersely, stubbornly, the words came between the puffs of smoke.

"The lass—her name."

"It was McIntyre's lass."

"John McIntyre's lass—the daughter o' that scunnerl. Ye hae been after McIntyre's lass, weel—I'll be damned."

The Chief strode up and down the room, his thumbs in the belt of his kilt; his face red with anger. In his indignation he was sniffing like a startled horse, a mannerism of his which the settlers knew full well. Cameron and Mac-Tavish sat listening.

"It's a damned fine colony," snapped Allan, "where a man of twenty-five canna love as he pleases. Be I a child, to be hectored thus?"

"Love—ye rake—love! I'll make grief enough for the McIntyres wi'oot ye dishonouring them. Love—ye was-trel. Would ye take her to wife?" he demanded ironically.

"I would—I love her and,—by God, I'll hae her in wed-lock if I can—wi'out it, if I must."

The father glared at Allan for an instant, then continued his tramp up and down the room, snorting contemptuously, yet eyeing his son thoughtfully.

For years he had been urging on Allan the necessity of marrying and settling down. To see a grand-son on his knee—a grand-son who would carry on the line of McNab, was one of his dearest dreams. The lad's choice of a wife, the daughter of the "black sheep," John McIntyre, was a bitter pill to swallow, yet it might mean the saving of the boy.

"If I give my consent to your marryin' McIntyre's lass, wull ye give me your word to settle down and live like a decent man?" he demanded, as he came to a halt.

"That I wull gladly," Allan replied.

The Chief stared at him fixedly for a moment, then took another turn the length of the room. "Weel, lad," he began, "'tis no the wife I had in mind for ye."

Allan uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"Weel, weel, lad," he said with an air of resignation, "hae your way—hae your way." Then his eye brightened. "Come, give me your hand on it. Ye shall hae the lass and fine tocher * wi' her, but there's to be no more roistering in Montreal, ye mind noo."

"I promise, father," said Allen gravely.

"Lad, ye gladden my auld heart," said the Chief, a new note of tenderness in his voice. "I hae long wisht for this day."

"MacTavish!" he called to the Chancellor. "Send a note to John Mohr McIntyre, and tell him that next Monday the McNab wull call on him in pairson wi' a message o' peace and good will." He paused for a moment. "No, we'll give him more time. Make it next Wednesday."

* Dowry.

"Here, Mr. Craig—Allan," he cried, in a jocular tone, "shake hands. Be ye two school-laddies to be fightin' o'er the kisses o' a bit o' a lass?" With ill grace the men clasped hands.

"I congratulate you, sir," said Craig stiffly.

"Dinna be in sic a hurry, Meester Surveyor," gurgled Cameron, who in the meanwhile had been applying himself steadily to the contents of the bowl. "Dinna ye be in sic a hurry. Unless I miss my guess, the McIntyres will give but the back o' their hand to Allan Dhu."

"What—ye vagabond!" roared the Chief. "McCuan, Angus," he bellowed, "throw yon fellow out. Zounds! one o' my clansmen refuse to marry into the family o' their Chief. Out o' my house, ye ingrate, ye sot. Let me no see yer face again in Kennell Lodge."

Cameron's intoxication had now reached the quarrelsome stage. In his present mood he would have welcomed a conflict with the devil himself. He was nearing the door and at a safe distance.

"Save your wind, Chief, to cool yer parritch," he jeered.

He lurched heavily against the table, almost upsetting the Chancellor and sprawled to the floor. As he fell his arms swept books and papers from the table. Making a futile attempt to restore them to the indignant MacTavish, some quirk in his drunken brain prompted him to purloin a handful of letters and conceal them under his jersey.

A moment later Cameron's voice, shrill and defiant, pitched high with liquor, resounded from the terrace:

"Away to the woods, to the caves, to the rocks
Ere I own the usurper, I'll couch wi' the fox,
And tremble, false Whigs, in the midst o' your glee,
Ye've no seen the last o' my bonnet and me."

But to the Chief, the announcement of his son's purpose was the occasion of untold satisfaction; it meant the settling of the succession. He bade McCuan fill the glasses about the board, and striding to the door, called into the darkness:

"McNee—McNee!"

A fat, cheery little man, attired like the chief, in kilt and sporran, entered the room, the bag-pipes under his arm. For centuries, as far back as written history ran, had the ancestors of James McNee been hereditary pipers for the Lairds of McNab.

"Fill yersal a dram, Jeems, and give us a skirl o' the pipes."

A fine figure McNee made, as striding up and down the long room, the gay-coloured streamers flaunting over his shoulders, his step ever keeping time to the wild fierce strains that have stirred the hearts of Scotland's sons for centuries to deeds of glory. Joyously, triumphantly, replete with all the proud daring of the mountain Celt poured forth the "Co-thional an Aba," the war son of the clan McNab.

The Chief sank back in a chair, and his face wreathed in a smile. MacTavish laid down his pen, and his withered visage twisted into a puckered grin; his keen old eyes softened as his foot beat time on the wolf-skin rug. Enthralled by the music, the four men sat in silence, their thoughts far away among the mist-wrapped hills of Perthshire—the thoughts of all, save Barclay Craig.

In his heart raged a fierce rebellion. He was thinking of the splendid spirited girl, Flora McIntyre, given over to the embrace of the blackguard scion of McNab. Allan was leering triumphantly at him across the table. Then the walls seemed to waver. His head grew dizzy, and a feeling of faintness overcame him. The heated room, the liquor, his suppressed resentment at Allan's nuptial plans, and the long ride of the day had sapped his strength. He rose unsteadily, took a taper from the table and bade his hosts good-night.

As he extinguished the light in his room and was about to close the window, he leaned for a moment on the wide ledge, drinking in the cold night air. It seemed to cool the bitterness in his heart.

To the south, beyond the mouth of the Madawaska, the

full-orbed moon threw across the bosom of the lake, two hundred feet below him, a shimmering pathway of molten gold. Set like a row of diamonds in a band of black velvet, glittered the campfires of the Indian village on the Pontiac shore. Mingled with the murmur of the rapids at the mouth of the Madawaska came, softened by distance, the rhythm of an old French chanson. A riverman was singing:

"Vive le Roi, Vive la Reine
Vive la Compagnie."

Suddenly the figure of a woman, bent and veiled, stood out clear against the moonlit sky. Then the scene darkened, the moon slipped behind a cloud, and when it emerged, the form had disappeared.

CHAPTER IV

"IN THE NAME OF THE QUEEN"

"Ye must sarve the King,
Sez the Exciseman,
'Tis the will av God,
Sez Jack McCann."

AS Murty McGonigal sang his joyous lilt of the old land, his keen jack-knife added shaving after shaving to the pile of kindling he was preparing for the morning fire.

The slim young man seated on the edge of the bunk, tuning the strings of a violin, turned his curly black head, and flashed an admiring smile on the singer. In his fine dark-featured face was irresistible good humor, and from his laughing eyes looked out the soul of a man upon whom the cares of life would ever sit lightly. When he spoke it was in the soft patois of the French-Canadian.

"Sing on, mon ami. Mebbe so, I can catch him de air. Eet ees livelee wan."

Searchingly he drew his bow across the strings as Murty's baritone voice swung on.

"Then lead the way to Carty's still
Beyant the bog be Rackrent hill.
For him that finds his saycret hold,
Is a pocket filled with English gold.

"Sure the way is hard,
Sez Jack McCann.
I'm not afeered,
Sez the Exciseman.

"O'er hills and stones went the Exciseman
A' measuring shanks with Jack McCann.
His legs were stiff, his fate were sore,
His sowl was black with oaths he swore.

"'Tis a murthering road,
Sez the Exciseman.
Ye must sarve your king,
Sez Jack McCann.

"His breath was gone, his back was wake,
The heart av him was like to break.
He missed his step on a slippery log
And sank his depth in Kilquill bog.

"Now pull me out,
Sez the Exciseman.
'Tis the will av God,
Sez Jack McCann."

For a moment Murty stopped to heap more wood on the fire, the ruddy radiance of which lighted up the interior of the log cabin.

"And after dat—what happen him?" asked the French-Canadian, with childish interest. His fiddle had caught the strain and was keeping tune as Murty sang on:

"'Tis a foine saft bed ye're lyin' in,
Sez Mac to him with wicked grin.
For all av me, 'tis there ye'll stay
Till Gabriel's horn blows the wurruld away.

"He came no more,
Did that Exciseman,
'Twas the will av God
Said Jack McCann."

"'Tis a song av ould Galway, Narcisse," the Irishman explained, "in the days whin it was fine sport pottin' the landlords like patridges, from behind the hedgerows. Sure 'tis meself that wishes thim days wur back agin," he sighed.

Then he enquired with a change of tone:

"An' what did Father Dontigny at the Quyon have to

say to-day? Did he give thim Frinchmen a lambastin' for drinkin' too much av the whiskey 'blanc'?"

For Narcisse, ever a faithful son of Mother Church, had that Sunday morning, as every Sunday morning, tramped the four miles to the landing near Kennell Lodge, and paddled six miles across the lake to attend Mass at Quyon, a twenty-mile trip in all. Murty, as usual had refused to accompany him, which grieved the pious soul of Narcisse exceedingly. He laid down the violin and said in a serious tone:

"Is it possible, ma fren' Murty, dat you have no care for dat immortal soul of yours? Not for six mont' now have you been to de Mass. It is not good. One day in seven is not mooch to give to de Bon Dieu."

"Thru for ye, lad, but whin I pound iron all wake, 'tis but little ambition I have for the long trail to the Quyon on Sunday marnins. The good Lord is kind av understandin' me, bye, if I deserve anny Hell, shure I'm getting it in advance, juggling red-hot horseshoes day after day."

He took down the gourd hanging on the wall, dipped it into a bucket standing on a bench and helped himself to a copious draft of water. Then stepping to the door, he threw the few remaining drops into the darkness, remarking as he did so:

"Stand aside, plaze."

"Now, for why, Murty," enquired Narcisse, "do you always say dat word w'en you throw away some water from de dipper. 'Stand aside, plaze,' " he mimicked.

"Shure, 'tis to warn the good payple—the fairies. 'Twud be bad luck to sprinkle wan av them should he be hangin' about by chanct."

"Ah, yes, dose fairee," there was suppressed amusement in Charbonneau's tone, "you seem to be well acquaint wit' deir ways. Tell me, my Murty, w'en did dose good people, de fairee, come over? Was it wit' de French, or wit' de English, or did dey come over only wit' de good Irish like yourself?" His eyes were dancing with mischief.

"Whisht, man, whisht," McGonigal warned uneasily. "Niver spake disrayspectfully av thim. 'Tis not safe, Narcisse. 'Twud bring their displeasure on this house and all it houlds."

"Surely not, Murty," bantered Narcisse. "Dat would not be possible. Is not de horseshoe still dere above de door, where you nail him with de point turn up to keep de good luck from run out? But my question you have not answer'. W'en did dey come over—dees good people?"

McGonigal shifted uncomfortably in his chair and frowned, but the winning smile on the face of his friend was infectious and he smiled back.

For who could be angry with Narcisse Charbonneau? Was he not the minstrel of the grant, who fiddled away their sorrows in many a night of wholesome revelry? What house but had its latch-string out to the laughing hewer, whose mind was as clean as a child's, whose heart was as tender as a girl's, and whose effervescent merri-ment drove the frown from the brow of the misanthrope, and denied the forebodings of the croaker? Gloom fled before him, mirth kept pace with his footsteps, and impending calamity was dwarfed or banished at his approach. There was in him some quality—something that radiated from him and leavened their sombre lives. Narcisse had a smile and a kiss for the world, and a grateful world ever repaid his faith with a laugh and a caress.

"'Tis but a haythen ye are, Narcisse, for all yer church-goin'," commented Murty, with a grin. "Sure, 'tis a mortal shame that I should have to be tellin' ye the things that ye should have l'arned with your prayers. 'Twas a poor broughten-up ye had put on ye in the days av yer youth-ness, I'm thinkin'."

"'Tis the fallen angels they are," he went on, more gravely. "'Twas when the ould Divil—bad cess to him—started a faction fight in Heaven, an' the angels commenced prying up the gold bricks out av the streets and trunning them at one another. Sure it must have been just like an Orange riot in Belfast—annyway, at the end ould Nick

got the worst av it, and him and his friends were trun' over the battlemints av Heaven."

"Battlemints?" queried Narcisse. "What mean him dat word?"

"I dunno exactly meself," admitted Murty, as he poked at the fire, "but I think it means somethin' like the back fence. And so they fell, nine hundred thousand av them. And where did they fall to? Will ye be after telling me that, ye haythen?" he demanded.

"To de Hell of de Devil, surely."

"Now that," McGonigal pointed his pipe stem impressively at Narcisse, "shows what a poor tayologian ye are. No, sir, the divil hadn't started Hell yet. Previous to this time, he was in a good standin' in Heaven, where the Lucifers were, in a manner av speakin', one av the first families. Now, if he took all his followers with him to Hell, 'tis plain the place would be filled up, and there would be no room at all, at all, for the sinners and the haythen. They had a scrumptious fight in Heaven, and 'twas an angel called Saint Michael, a fine upstandin' sort av a fighter he was, that bate and trun out ould Nick and his crowd. Do ye note the name, Narcisse? 'Michael'—Mike—Mick—'tis a good Irish name that."

"But, Murty, forget not Sain' Gabriel—he help some—eh? A good French name dat,—Gabriel."

"Nayther to Hell or Purgatory did they fall," continued Murty, "but to the earth, where they still wander about like the poor lost souls they are. But 'tis said that on the last day they will have another chanct. And that explains the origin av the good people."

"Do dey bite folks sometime?" Charbonneau's face wore an expression of bland innocence.

"Bite people—bite people, ye omadthawn!" There was indignant scorn in Murty's tone. "If ye had the sense that God gives geese, ye'd know that a spirit has no teeth. But I suppose some allowance must be made for yer being only a Frinchy. We can't all be Irish—more's the pity," he added indulgently.

"'Tis a quare little folk they are. Often they're aisily offended, and then they are liable to wither an arm or a leg av ye, or set yer wits woolgatherin'. But if they take a likin' to ye, there is nawthin' they won't do for ye. Wan evenin' when I was still a gorsoon I was walking home by meself from a fair at Loughrea, when I set down to rest by the side av the road. 'Twas but for a minute I closed me eyes, and when I opened them, I was sittin' be me father's gate. Shure, and 'twas the good people carried me for a joke."

Narcisse suppressed a chuckle.

"Mebbe 'twas some of dat good Irish poteen whiskey you wish for so manee time."

"Divil a bit av it. Father Tom Burke wanst saw a whole procession av thim, and they used to call 'Father Tom—Father Tom' at him as he walked the lanes, and——"

A loud pounding at the door interrupted Murty's tale. He opened it to admit a middle-aged undersized man. There was gratification in the face of the stranger as his quick eyes swept the interior—McGonigal standing near, his hand on the door; Narcisse seated on the bunk toying with his violin. Quickly he spoke:

"In the name of the Queen, I call on both of you for assistance."

Narcisse, alarm evident in his face, sprang to his feet; his bow dropped unnoticed to the floor. Murty muttered a vindictive oath and closed the door. His face an angry red, his fists clenched, the smith glared at the stranger for a moment as if he were about to burst into open defiance.

"Prenez garde, Murty," warned Narcisse, in his own tongue. Then, turning to the officer, he placed a stool before the fire.

"Will Monsieur, de process server, take him a seat?" he said courteously.

The long-expected had happened. An officer from Perth, armed with papers for McIntyre and McFarlane, had

caught them napping. They were now legally summoned to aid him. To refuse assistance to a Queen's officer was a serious offence, according to the laws of the land and the time.

McGonigal strode up and down the little room, his face tense, his arm swinging, the mighty fist of his right hand smacking suggestively into the palm of his left.

"I cannot wait long," insisted the process-server. "I have legal papers here to serve on James McFarlane and John Mohr McIntyre. They must be served to-night, while I can catch them in their own homes, and before they learn of my presence in the grant. I summons you both in the name of the Queen to guide me to their houses."

"Tubbe shure—tubbe shure. 'Tis loyal subjects av the Queen we are, Narcisse and meself," said Murty, with a sly wink at his comrade.

Every trace of annoyance had faded from his countenance. He was smiling cheerfully, almost amiably on the emissary of the law. Then from his pursed lips broke out a shrill rollicking whistle, the air of "The Exciseman":

"Ye must sarve yer King,
Sez the Exciseman.
'Tis the will av God,
Sez Jack McCann."

"Mon Dieu, it is dark like wan black cat," murmured Narcisse, as the trio stepped into the night.

Dark it was, with the intense, pitchy darkness of the Canadian pine woods on a starless night. Above the raucous chorus of the frogs came the ceaseless song of the Madawaska chortling over its boulders.

Through the all-encompassing blackness the Irishman led the way down the road and across the stretches of corduroy in the low places. The soft slither of their feet on the sod, and the unevenness of the ground told that they had entered a deserted winter road among the timber. For two miles they pressed on. As they debouched into a

clearing, an opening in the woods, that was felt rather than seen, Murty halted.

"Just a minute now—till I get my bearings. 'Tis a mortal dark night. McIntyre's house lies over to the right about a mile. We are on the short-cut through the swamp. 'All right, byes, come on."

A moment later the three were floundering knee-deep in a swampy pool. Hurriedly they retreated to dry ground.

"By Garrah—'tis quare—the road should be somewhere hereabouts," murmured McGonigal.

Again he led, this time to the left, and again they found themselves face to face with menacing swamp water.

"Well, now if that doesn't bate Banagher, and Banagher bate ould Nick. The road is bewitched, or I'm a Dutchman," protested Murty.

Standing in the darkness behind the officer, the slight shoulders of Narcisse shook with suppressed merriment.

The distant song of the river was drowned now by the sibilant hum of millions of vicious swamp mosquitoes that were descending on the three men in unseen clouds. Their hands, faces and necks were soon covered by the venomous pests.

"Oh, damn the flies—they are terrible," groaned the officer, as he smacked himself on hand and cheek. "For God's sake, let us get out of here. Man, we will be eaten alive."

"Wurrah—wurrah. 'Tis lost I am entirely," mourned Murty as he busied himself fighting off the mosquitoes.

"Get us out of here. Hurry up, for Heaven's sake."

"Sure I'll do the best I can. I'll get ye out all right, but it will take time. Light a smudge, Narcisse, to kape the blood-thirsty devils away. I'll be aff and hunt for the road. Do ye shout ivery few minutes and I'll be doing the same, so we won't lose wan another."

Narcisse, bending over the little pile of sparkling twigs, heard Murty's low whisper as he passed.

"Be after me whin I call for help." Then he disappeared in the night.

"A hell of a guide," snorted the process-server, as he moved about the fire in an effort to keep in the current of the smoke.

Higher and higher streamed the red flames, lighting up at times the tall forms of the sombre pines, and glinting on the swamp pools at their feet.

"He—e-e-euh!" called Murty, from a distance.

"He—e-e-euh!" called back Narcisse.

The emissary of the Perth Court of Sessions was swearing eloquently and vigorously as he slapped himself on cheek and brow. From his eyes, now smarting with the acrid smoke, tears were flowing.

Fainter and more distant came the call:

"He-e-euh."

Narcisse hallooed back.

"Ver' bad swamp—dis, Monsieur," he warned. "Dere is manee place, where wan step wrong, and you would go over de head of you. And you would not come again, nevaire—nevaire."

"Damn McNab and his Scotch savages," snorted the process-server.

"To de first part of dat prayer, permit me to say de Amen, Monsieur," came in gentle tones from Narcisse.

"He-e-e-e-euh!—Help! Help!—I'm in!—I'm in!" called the voice of McGonigal, in an apparent agony of fear.

Charbonneau sprang to his feet, well-simulated alarm in his face.

"Mon Dieu—he has fall him in de swamp. He call for help. Me, I mus' go for help him."

"We will both go," said the process-server cautiously.

"Non, non, Monsieur. Dat is not de bes' way. You stay here and continue de call. W'en I get him pull out we will return. Keep de fire burn. Do not leave it. 'Tis ver' dangerous should you lose him de smudge."

"Adieu, monsieur; ma fren', de process-server, adieu," he added almost caressingly. "Be of a brave heart till we meet again."

Hour after hour waited the officer, but his guides re-

turned not. Hour after hour, soaked to the skin, shivering with the chill of the swamp, a prey to thousands of winged torturing pests.

A dozen times he piled high the fire, and by its light sought the road, but everywhere he was met by the threatening pools and uncertain footing of the morass. Boiling with rage and indignation, he made the night ring with his frantic calls for help, and bitter maledictions on the Chief and all his clan.

But Narcisse did not hear. He was four miles away, galloping through the clearings by the Dochart and to the houses in the little hamlet of Arnprior, warning the inhabitants of the arrival of the process-server.

But to Murty McGonigal, as he rode wildly on, bearing the same tidings to the folk of the Flat Rapid settlement, came muffled afar off the doleful shouts of the bewildered officer.

The Irishman's head was bare, the night wind blowing through his bristling ruddy locks, his gnarled hands clenched in the mane of his saddleless horse, and his rebellious Celtic soul filled with fierce exultation.

"Whe-e-e-e! Whe-e-e-e! Howl, ye divil ye, howl."

Like some primitive, savage war chant the darkened woods echoed back his triumphant song:

"His legs were stiff; his fate were sore.

His sowl was black with oaths he swore.

For all av me, 'tis there ye'll stay

Till Gabriel's horn blows the world away."

Full noon was it the next day when a mud-daubed, swamp-soaked figure tottered to the door of Kennell Lodge and sought admittance. It was the process-server, his eyes almost closed and his face swollen beyond recognition from bites of the venomous mosquitoes.

To his amazement and disgust, he was informed that the Laird desired no further proceedings against John

Mohr McIntyre, and that action against McFarlane was to be postponed until further notice.

Surrendering his papers to the Laird, he set out the next day for Perth, vowing never to return to the Chief's inhospitable territory.

CHAPTER V.

A KINGDOM SCORNEO

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below."

THROUGH the dim aisles of the forest echoed the voice of the singer as he jogged along on his old bay mare.

Tall, ungainly, attired in shiny and well-worn black, his high beaver hat set straight and firm on his abundant grey locks, the whole appearance of the man bespoke the divine. In truth, a grotesque figure was the Reverend George Freer, yet in the stern deeply lined face was much of dignity, and in the firm mouth, purpose and character. From the cavernous hollows beneath his jutting brows looked out calm, steady grey eyes that could betimes twinkle with unexpected humour.

Stern theologian as he was of the school of Calvin and John Knox, in the harsh struggle of his parishioners with the primitive stubbornness of Nature he seemed to have found a fitting echo of his own personality. His faith was positive; his construction of the Scriptures literal. To him the Devil was no dim abstraction, no mere theological personification of the power of evil, but an actual concrete personality against whose maleficent influence he, an unworthy soldier of the Lord, waged eternal war. God was less a loving father than a stern and upright judge, and in his lengthy sermons the happiness of heaven and the joys of the blessed held but second place to the terrors of the last judgment and the pains of hell. Drunkenness and immorality he denounced with unsparing invective, yet

his kindly heart, concealed beneath his harsh exterior, saw but little harm in an occasional glass of well-aged whiskey or the innocent pleasures of a country dance.

"He's no hippycrit, the pr'acher. 'Tis a dacent sowl he has behint that cast-iron face," Murty McGonigal had said of him.

As he entered the door of the McIntyre home, Mrs. McIntyre hastily dusted a stool with her apron and smilingly protested:

"Ye are in time for dinner, Meenester. But could ye no hae sent word o' yer coming?"

"The servant o' the Lord kens not from hour to hour where he may be called, Mistress McIntyre," he responded gravely. "There's a poor lad o'er in Buchanans' shanty must soon meet his Maker. A tree fell on him last night. I am hastening there."

"Sit up, Mr. Freer," invited Flora, as she placed the chairs about the table.

Hardly were they seated, when the creak of saddles and the sound of voices came to them through the open door.

"'Tis the Laird and Allan Dhu," exclaimed Flora in startled tones.

John McIntyre rose to his feet and stood staring at the door expectantly. Early this morning his son Peter had at last yielded to his arguments and had ridden off to Kennell Lodge to seek an interview with the Chief concerning the anonymous letter. And two days before Piper McNee had arrived with the Chief's note announcing that he was coming to-day on a mission of good-will.

With masterful tread, the McNab strode across the threshold, followed by Allan Dhu. The Laird bowed low to Mrs. McIntyre, till the eagle feather in his bonnet almost swept the puncheon floor.

"I bid ye good-day, Maistress McIntyre, and this"—he said, as his bold eyes dwelt approvingly on Flora's face and figure—"and this is the lass."

"John Mohr McIntyre," he began, his orotund tones filling the room. "For more than two years ye and I hae been fightin' one another, but the day I come in peace and no in strife. If ye wull, we can be friends."

From under his heavy thatched brows the eyes of John McIntyre were silently searching the face of the Chief. His wife stood twisting her apron ends nervously. Flora's puzzled gaze wandered from the florid face of the Chief to the saturnine countenance of Allan Dhu. But the usually sombre features of the Reverend George Freer were wreathed in a glad smile. Well aware of the hostile relations between the Chief and his clansman, he was overjoyed at the prospect of a reconciliation.

"And noo," went on the Chief, as he took a seat, "I'll make a short tale o' it. My lad here loves your lassie yonder. He is set on the match and I canna find it in my heert to cross him. Though I'll no be denying," he admitted frankly, "that I hae had other plans for him. Wi' the wedding words, John Mohr, we'll forget the cursed bonds and I wull give ye a written quittance."

The lines about John McIntyre's mouth tightened and his brow darkened. One quick glance at the anxious face of his daughter told him all he wished to learn. Knowing Allan Dhu as he did, the proposition was insulting enough, but that the Chief should take advantage of his own precarious legal position to force the match upon him, to offer him immunity in exchange for his daughter's hand, was humiliating. To consent to the match was unthinkable, yet he knew well that a direct refusal would be an affront to the Laird that would never be forgotten or forgiven. Then the caution of his race spoke:

"'Tis a very serious matter, Chief. 'Twull need a bit of thought. Wull your lad be o' the same mind a year from now, think ye?" he questioned.

The Laird smiled indulgently. That McIntyre contemplated a positive refusal of his offer never entered his mind. John Mohr's hesitation and the subtle suggestion

of a year's delay was but an attempt, he concluded, to yield with some measure of grace.

Again the McNab's smiling glance wandered to Flora, who stood near her father, her hands clasped together, her eyes bent on him beseechingly. There was open admiration in his gaze.

"'Tis a genty lassie, she is," he commented. "Allan, ye de'il, a sharp eye ye hae for a pretty face and a weel-turned ankle. Weel, weel, ye come by it honestly enough. A trig lassie is yours, John Mohr, weel worthy o' a McNab and weel fitted to be maistress o' Kennell Lodge."

"Come, come, man, say the word. Dinna ask the young folks to wait a year. 'Twud be most cruel. Ye hae been young once yersel'. Say the word, McIntyre and Kennell Lodge will see sic doings as hae never been since the first settlers came to the grant."

"Marryin' is a grave matter, Chief," said John Mohr slowly. "It should no be done in haste. A year is no long—I canna give my answer afore then."

McIntyre's tone and the quick setting of his mouth told his decision was final.

The Chief stared at him almost curiously for a moment; then as he noted the determination in McIntyre's countenance, his brow flamed hot with indignation. But he held himself well in hand.

"McIntyre," he said impressively, "do ye ken what is being laid the day at the feet o' your daughter? Would ye no hae your grand-bairns—yours and mine—the rulers of Kennell Lodge in all the years that are to come?"

"Man! man!" he expostulated, "'tis no an ordinary proposition o' marriage. The son and heir o' the McNab canna wait for a year for an answer from the daughter o' a clansman."

He rose to his feet and concluded haughtily: "Ye must answer me noo, John McIntyre."

For a fleeting instant the two strong, determined men stood gazing into one another's eyes. Then slowly, almost reluctantly, McIntyre made answer:

"Since ye wull hae it so, I wull answer ye noo. As ye hae said, ye hae laid at the feet o' my lass Kennell Lodge and all therein. But, Chief, there be things that are aye worth more than riches and high place in the land and those things I would hae the man who weds my lassie bring to her. I would hae him bring to her a decent life, a good name and a clean heart. 'Tis time for blunt speaking, Chief—your son canna bring her those things.

"But more, far more than that—for a greater reason, I must say no. My lass doesna love your son and no man, be he the son o' a Chief or a King, can win the daughter o' John McIntyre by dint o' threats or promise o' wealth and power. Flora has no love for Allan Dhu. Spier o' her yersal."

For fully a minute the Laird of McNab sat blinking at McIntyre in stupefied amazement. Secretly he had prided himself on his magnanimity in giving his consent to a matrimonial alliance with the daughter of the man who had so successfully flouted his authority. But his well-meant condescension had been met by defiance, his generosity by insult. Allan sat, his surly brow bent on the floor, biting his finger nails nervously. Quivering with injured pride, furious with indignation, the Laird sprang to his feet.

"No, I'll no ax her," he bellowed. "By the God that made me, John McIntyre, but ye shall rue this day. The son and heir of the Chief o' the McNabs refused by the daughter o' a clansman—ay, the daughter o' a process-dodger, a jailbird—a criminal—a traitor——"

"Stop!" shouted McIntyre, whose rising anger now bid fair to master him. "Chief though ye be, ye canna cast sic words in my teeth beneath my own roof. Take yersal out o' my house."

"Ye—ye——" gasped the Chief. "Ye order me out o' your house. My God, is all the world gone mad that sic a thing can be? Ye——" Choking with passion, he raised his riding whip above his head.

In an instant the heavily weighted butt would have

fallen on the brow of John McIntyre had not the tall form of the clergyman, like a flash, interposed between them. With both arms outstretched he pushed the antagonists apart and held them there.

"In God's name, I command peace," he ordered. "Chief McNab, McIntyre is right. The house o' a British subject is his castle. When he bids ye, ye must go."

"Take your hands off me," cried the Chief. "Ye whining psalm-singer. I'll hae ye unfrocked by the Synod. Ye, a minister o' the Gospel, to be aider and abettor o' a clansman when he insults his Chief. Faugh!——"

"But little do I care for your threats," returned the clergyman, his now fiery eye fixed full on the Laird. "The Lord wull take care o' his own. Aye, and he wull mete out justice to the great ones o' the land when they lay heavy burdens on the backs o' the people, burdens, as the Book says, 'too grievous to be borne.' E'en so great a man as King David could no steal the one ewe lamb o' a poor man wi'out the wrath o' God fallin' heavy upon him."

On the clergyman the Laird cast one contemptuous glance, then he turned to McIntyre and in accents deadly cold he said:

"Till noo, John Mohr McIntyre, ye and I were but two men wi' a difference atween us that could be settled wi' gold. But from noo on we be mortal enemies. I'll no rest till I hae crushed ye. I'll see this roof lie low in the dust, and your clearin' I'll sow wi' salt as a warnin' to the foolish to beware how they affront their Chief. To-day I hae done ye the greatest honour I could do a man, and ye hae cast insults in my face. From noo on 'tis a blood feud atween us."

So saying he strode out the doorway and was followed by Allan Dhu. In silence they watched them depart. When their hoof-beats had died away Flora, to whose face the colour had returned, stepped over to her father, slipped her arms about his neck, and kissed him gravely on the cheek.

"You spoke as I thought you would, daddie. You said

what I would have said—but far better than I could have said it.”

But Mrs. McIntyre, upon whom her husband’s precarious position had long weighed heavily, sank into a rocking chair, threw her apron over her head, and sobbed aloud in an agony of apprehension.

Only the Reverend Freer seemed unmoved. “Dinna greet, Maistress McIntyre,” he said as he laid a gentle hand on her shoulder. “Dinna greet.”

“The Lord is o’er us all,” he continued, his voice vibrating with faith infinite and complete. “Dinna forget what the Good Book says: ‘Be ye no afeared o’ sudden fear, neither o’ the desolation o’ the wicked when it cometh.’”

He clasped his hands, closed his eyes, and reverently bent his head. The others followed his example.

“We wull turn to the Lord for help and guidance. Let us pray,” said the Reverend George Freer.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAJESTY OF THE LAW

BARCLAY CRAIG, seated alone in the big room of Kennell Lodge, laid down the month-old paper and yawned.

"I bid you good-day, sir," said a youthful masculine voice. A young man, hat in hand, had stepped noiselessly into the room.

In the timbre of the voice something strangely familiar that echoed to the innermost recesses of his being brought the surveyor to his feet.

Not only the voice—it seemed as if the very eyes of Flora McIntyre were looking at him out of the young man's keen, handsome face. There could be no mistake—the clean-cut features, the curving eyebrows, black and heavy, the dimpled chin, all save the lad's aquiline nose, bore a resemblance that was startling.

"I thank you and bid you the same," responded Craig, as he extended his hand. "If I do not mistake, your name is McIntyre."

Peter smiled happily. "Aye, sir—Peter McIntyre o' the Flat Rapids."

Flora's brother came to a quick conclusion. This bearded dignified gentleman, with something of the great world in his manner and apparently at home at Kennell Lodge, was the mysterious stranger whom a few days ago had been taken for a process-server. This was the man who had rescued his sister from the unwelcome embrace of Allan Dhu and administered to him merited castigation.

"I wish to thank ye, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Craig—Barclay Craig."

"Was it no ye who rode through the Rapids last Friday? We are much beholden to ye—my sister and masel."

"Ah-h! The young lady is your sister. I would have known as much. The resemblance is remarkable."

"Aye, sir. So every one says. We be twins. We would be pleased to hae ye visit wi' us, Mr. Craig."

"Gladly will I come——" began Craig, when a noise at the door interrupted him.

"Angus—Angus!" called the deep voice of the Chief. "Take my horse."

Followed by Allan, the McNab strode into the room. Still smarting under the sting of McIntyre's rejection of his plans for the future of his son and heir, the Laird's brow was wrinkled in an ugly frown, his face forbidding. As he caught sight of Peter McIntyre he glared at him haughtily for a moment; then, turning, he deliberately closed and barred the door behind him.

"McCuan—McNee—MacTavish!" he shouted. "Here, all o' ye!" The three came bustling into the room.

"Arrest yon fellow," he ordered, pointing with his riding whip towards Peter, who had risen to his feet.

White and then red, turned the face of Peter McIntyre, his jaw set and his eye glittered ominously.

"It was at the word o' the McNab," he sneered, "that I came to Kennell—to find mysel' trapped like a rat in a cage. Ye'll no take me so easy."

As he spoke he sprang towards a broadsword hanging on the wall. But the sharp eyes of MacTavish had already divined his purpose and he threw himself in the young man's way.

"Out o' my road!" roared Peter. He grasped the puny form of the Chancellor, lifted him bodily from the floor and pitched him headlong against McCuan, sending them both sprawling.

"Ye damned scribbler o' nameless letters," hissed Allan Dhu, as he struck Peter square in the mouth.

For a moment Peter, staggered by the blow, leaned against the wall, then with all of the pent-up hate of

months nerving his arm, he threw himself on the son of the Chief like an enraged tiger. One after another, his fists drove in Allan's face till a well-delivered left caught McNab on the point of the chin and stretched him senseless on the floor.

Instantly the other three, McCuan, McNee and the Chief, were upon him. Fighting, struggling, wrestling, they bore him by their sheer weight to the floor. MacTavish had risen shakily to his feet; Allan Dhu still lay dazed and motionless.

"The irons, MacTavish—the irons," grunted the Laird.

The Chancellor hurried over with the handcuffs, but in that moment Peter's sinewy hand clamped on the throat of the Chief. With the tenacity of a bull-dog, he held his grip, unheeding the blows that the aged arms of McCuan and McNee were raining on his defenceless head.

Under that remorseless pressure the face of the Laird was slowly purpling; his eyes were starting from their sockets. Exerting all of the strength in his massive body, he managed to regain his feet, dragging the clinging form of McIntyre upward with him. The latter's fingers still dug deep in the Laird's throat.

Backward and forward they swayed, one man against three, bumping unnoticed against the walls and upsetting furniture. At times no sound was audible but their hard-drawn breaths and the choking gasps of the Chief, whose sturdy legs were giving way under him.

"My God! he'll kill the Laird," panted old McCuan, as he strove ineffectually to loosen Peter's grip.

Allan Dhu had risen painfully to his feet and was leaning against the table. Then, his battered face twisted in fury, he charged into the struggling group.

Barclay Craig, standing in a corner, his fists clenched, his fingers biting into the palms of his hands, saw the interlocked forms writhe and totter, then collapse in a heap, McIntyre underneath. An instant later he heard the sharp click of the closing manacles, and the four panting, breathless men drew away from the figure on the floor.

Unsteadily Peter rose to his feet; his face was scratched and bruised, his clothing torn; his lips trembling, but in his eyes still shone a light unconquerable.

"Ye young de'il o' a wildcat," gasped the Chief, "I'll tame ye yet."

McIntyre seemed not to hear him. His bloodshot eyes were fixed on the grinning countenance of Allan Dhu. In a twinkling he threw his manacled arms high above his head and brought them down on the latter's temple, cutting a wide gash, the mark of which McNab would carry to his dying day. Allan tottered, then with blood trickling down his face and a screaming oath, he whipped out his knife.

"Stand aside, lad," ordered the Chief, as he caught Allan's arm. "Ye'll no use dirks in this. 'Tis my own affair. Go mend your face. MacTavish, ye're no hurtit, be ye? McCuan, bring us a dram. We hae this gay young cock weel enough trussed."

As they sipped the liquor they slowly recovered their composure. MacTavish, as his acid mouth smacked at each taste, regarded the prisoner with an amused smile. Peter, his elbows on his knees, sat staring at the floor.

"Noo," remarked the Chief, as he rose to his feet, "we will tend to this young savage accordin' to the forms o' the law. Be ye ready, MacTavish?"

The Chancellor nodded, donned his horn-rimmed spectacles, took some books and papers from a shelf. The Chief took his seat behind a table on a dais at the end of the room.

"Open court, MacTavish," he directed.

"Oyez—oyez, all ye people," droned the Chancellor, "I do noo declare this court open, in the name o' Her Majesty, Victoria, Queen o' Great Britain and Ireland and o' the Dominions beyond the sea."

"What cases hae ye?" queried the Laird in a formal tone.

"But one, yer Honour. The case o' the Crown against

Peter McIntyre, charged wi' libel, slander and treasonable utterances agin' Her Majesty the Queen."

"Hae ye the papers all ready?"

"I hae that, yer Honour."

It was no idle boast. When, some days ago, the Laird had concluded that Peter was the author of the anonymous letter, he had ordered MacTavish to prepare all the necessary documents. In his sudden accession to the desires of his son he had forgotten all about them. That he had not ordered them destroyed as he had intended was indeed a fortuitous circumstance. Sitting as a magistrate, he had power, if in his opinion the evidence warranted it, to commit McIntyre to Perth jail to there await trial.

The Chancellor's voice wheezed on in the words of the formal complaint:

"That Peter McIntyre of the Township of McNab, in the district of Bathurst, with malice aforethought, in defiance of the law of the land, to the prejudice o' the good order and peace of the community and to the injury of one Archibald McNab, did wickedly slander and libel one Archibald McNab——"

"Change that," ordered the court. "There be three Archibald McNabs hereabouts. There is but one McNab o' McNab. Make it so read."

"Instruct the prisoner in his rights, Clerk," he warned MacTavish.

"Peter McIntyre, I noo warn ye that anything ye may say wull be used in evidence agin ye. How do ye plead?"

The young man's mouth curled scornfully.

"Hell to your soul, ye——"

"Call your witnesses, MacTavish," ordered the Court.

"I call the McNab o' McNab," responded MacTavish.

The Laird stepped down from the dais, and standing before MacTavish raised his right hand and was duly sworn. Formally he told his story—the receipt of the letter from the Governor, enclosing the alleged slanderous missive, his suspicion that Peter McIntyre was the

author, the confirmation of his suspicion when he compared the handwriting with that of the defendant who had signed his father's land lease as a witness. The Chief was addressing his remarks to the empty chair which he had vacated but a moment ago.

Barclay Craig stared at the spectacle in stupefied amazement. The room that but a few moments ago had been the scene of savage primitive combat was now transformed into a court of law, in which the complaining witness was acting as judge. That such a travesty of justice was possible in any land under the British flag, he could hardly believe.

MacTavish, his tongue continually moistening his thin lips, was scratching away industriously with his pen. The Chief, his evidence ended, again took his seat on the dais; the plaintiff had become the court again.

"Barclay Craig, take the stand."

The surveyor started to his feet, in surprise. For what possible reason could he be called as a witness in such a case? Reluctantly, he took his seat and was sworn.

"Hand him the two papers," directed the Court.

"Noo, Maister Craig, ye'll make a very impartial witness. Be those two handwritin's the same?" queried the Laird.

Only for a moment Craig's eyes scanned the two documents. His whole soul revolted at the proceedings; his anger was rapidly rising at the Chief's attempt to drag him into the case. Yet he knew something of law and was well aware that the Laird as magistrate was well within his powers in calling him to the witness stand. But no law, no court could force him to form or express an opinion.

"I have no opinion on the matter, your honour," he said stiffly, as he handed the papers back to MacTavish.

The McNab's eyes flashed angrily.

"But ye hae had much to do wi' writings, Meester Craig. Can ye no tell us if in your opinion they look alike—as if they were writ by the same hand?"

"If your honour please," Craig said slowly, "my life and my work have had but little to do with writings. It has kept me outdoors, and to the man of outdoors, all handwriting looks much alike. I cannot give an opinion. I have none," and leaving the chair with almost contemptuous dignity, he walked to the window.

"Heugh," snorted the Chief.

The Chancellor duly administered the oath to himself and gave his evidence. He had an opinion—a most decided one. The anonymous letter and the signature on the deed had been written by the same hand.

"Peter McIntyre," said the Chief gravely. "The Court rules that there is a sufficiency o' evidence to hold ye for trial at the coming Perth Assizes. I must send ye to jail."

McIntyre's answer was a sneer of defiance. Unterrified, undaunted, he met the Chief's gaze with a stare as haughty as his own. The lad's unconquerable spirit maddened the Laird.

"Ye young fool," he shouted. "Ye dinna ken that your neck is in danger. McNee—let my house be no longer contaminated by his presence. Faugh, I smell the air foul already. Take him out. Start wi' him at once. MacTavish will give ye the papers. Deliver him to the sheriff at Perth and get a receipt for him."

As Peter McIntyre, his shackled hands crossed in front of him, was led out of the door, he cast at Barclay Craig a swift glance of admiration and gratitude. In that moment, the souls of the two men went out to each other, and was born a friendship that was to last as long as life itself.

But as Craig, standing in the doorway, watched the two trotting away towards the village, he saw the prisoner's head droop pathetically and he thought he heard a boy's heavy sigh.

As McNee and Peter rode through the village, Duncan Cameron lounged out of the grog-shop of Hans the Dutchman. His gaze fell on the two horsemen, and he gasped

in astonishment. Then his kindly old face wrinkled in an anxious frown.

"Duncan—Duncan Cameron," he soliloquized. "A deil o' a scrape ye hae got the poor lad into. And noo ye must get him out—if ye hae to gang to jail for it yersal."

An hour later Duncan galloped out of Arnprior on the trail of McNee and his prisoner. As his horse halted to quench its thirst by a wayside stream, the old man's eyes clouded with perplexity. He grinned a little as he drew from his jersey two of the letters he had purloined the last night of his stay at Kennell Lodge. He was studying their contents for perhaps the hundredth time.

"Noo—what the deil can it all mean. The Laird hae axed the Governor for a trust-deed to the grant—for his own grant—heuch!"

"So that," he read, from the latter, "the said McNab can make transfers to those who have settled in the township o' the lands they have located."

Cameron read the extract twice and his look of wonder deepened. Then he carefully studied the other missive.

"And the Governor sitting in executive council says he wull no give him the trust-deed for the township."

"My God," he gasped, in an awe-struck whisper. "It could no be that the Laird doesna own the grant himsal."

For a space he sat staring silently between his horse's ears.

"Weel," he grinned, as he rode on. "It's masel that kens every nook and cranny o' Kennell Lodge and I'll find out the truth if I hae to steal every paper in MacTavish's desk."

CHAPTER VII

NO AFFAIR OF HIS

IT was no affair of his.

For the hundredth time that week Barclay Craig interrupted his own ruminations with this sudden mental conclusion. Walking his horse along the river bank, he was studying the topography incident to his survey work. All day long he had been revolving in his mind not the details of his vocation, but the internecine strife between the Chief and his clansman. In the fortunes and misfortunes of these sturdy, honest people he found himself keenly interested and as keenly disappointed in the attitude of the McNab, whom he had primarily conceived to be something of a patriarch and philanthropist.

Gradually and reluctantly he was becoming disillusioned of his initial appraisal of the man. This was doubly disconcerting because of the Chief's unceasing courtesy and friendliness. For the McNab was no ordinary man. His was a charming yet overpowering personality, pungent, vital and convincing to the last degree. The Laird liked and admired Craig, sought and enjoyed his company and paid him liberally, ever treating him, not as an employé or dependent, but as a guest and equal. His horses and his hounds, his guns and his servants, his choicest wines, and his finest tobaccos were all at Craig's command in unbounded hospitality.

Only that morning, the Laird, in his kindly paternal manner had suggested that Craig survey for himself an especially choice hundred-acre lot, to which he would give him title, rent free,—that he marry, build himself a home and become permanently attached to the township. The

Chief drew an alluring picture of the future of the grant, in which the swift march of progress would bring Craig wealth and opulence before middle age, and he ended by doubling the remuneration originally agreed upon for the survey work.

"It is no affair of mine," he repeated again to himself. Save the somewhat sentimental bond of nationality, he had nothing in common with the settlers. He was a stranger, an "incomer" not a part of the community life, a hired artisan, whose duty to himself lay in making the most of his opportunities. It was for the discontented pioneers of McNab to settle their own quarrel, work out their own problems, deal with their Chief as best they might. Why should he be so stirred by their factional struggle? Who was he to sit in judgment?

Yet he felt somehow that he could analyse more clearly and adjudicate more impartially the merits of the case than either of the parties to the conflict. By his familiarity with the world's history, and especially the history of his own land, he could easily comprehend the McNab's irrecconcilability to the changes of time, his ignoring of the new industrial freedom, and the development of independent individualities; among a people whom he still dreamed of holding as vassals. The Laird was confronted with more than mere quibbles of tithe and timber, he was face to face with a new generation of clansmen, a new time and a new country, and consequent new ideals of government and citizenship,—ideals which he could not comprehend and which he would not tolerate, and which it would be impossible for him to successfully curb.

But—after all, were the clansmen right? Were not the Chief's plans—barring certain inconsequent details, directed towards the general good? Was he not interesting capital in the district? But this morning, as he passed through the village Craig had noted the bustling activity about the saw mill and grist mill operated by George Buchanan, whom the Chief had brought from Montreal for that purpose. In the spring was to be laid the keel of a

small steamer, which would ply up and down the Ottawa between the head of Chats Rapids and Portage du Fort and for which a wharf has already been constructed at the landing below Kennell Lodge. The McNab's prophecy that in a few years the homesteads of the settlers would be the centre of a populous community, seemed to be in a fair way of realization. Had not the Laird of McNab the rights of personal despotism, Craig wondered.

He had argued it over and over. Reluctantly he saw in the regal Chief, too plainly the miniature counterpart of a Stuart or a Bourbon, and greatly he feared that this chieftain so generous,—generous before he was just, might perish as they did, in a futile struggle against the wider vision of a newer time. The Chief's besetting and incurable sin was his mediæval point of view.

No affair of his.—Confound sentiment! Why did it wring his heart and blur his vision. He had his own hard way to win. This was his opportunity. His early privations, his struggle to complete his education and maintain his gentility on a small patrimony, had made him value this, his first lucrative position in America. And yet was his attitude right? Was it manly; was it in keeping with his ideals to evade an issue which the course of events might force upon him?

Men who dodged responsibility, who passed the unpleasant duty to another, who took the golden toll and shirked the load, who stood calmly by and viewed without protest the workings of a wrong by which they profited—such men, and there were many such in the public eye in Canada at the time—had ever been the object of his deep seated contempt.

It was no affair of his that yonder Indian boy was endangering his life in a bark canoe, at the head of the rapids. Yet if by any chance that bronzed and primitive pagan were drowning, he must plunge into the chilly autumn current to save a life. He halted his horse and fastened his gaze on the youthful dare-devil. He, like the affairs of the grant, seemed hastening to a crisis. Like a swoop-

ing swallow he was recklessly skimming the brink of the cascade. Was it his affair, Craig wondered—he, a stranger to the woods, to warn the child of nature of his danger?

Even as he watched, the bark canoe swung lengthwise in the grasp of the current, and tipped slantingly over the brink. Like a living thing it picked its way amid the curling rollers, down the long incline towards the placidly flowing river, below the rapids. Craig was absorbed in admiration of the youngster's fearlessness, when a projecting rockspur touched the prow, and in a twinkling the upturned canoe was on its aimless, downward way. The boy was nowhere to be seen.

Rising in his stirrups, the surveyor caught a glimpse of the body of the lad sprawling helplessly over the last cascade, then again as it swirled into a sort of eddy and disappeared from sight. Here was an answer to his questioning.

No affair of his, this either. But events govern men more than men events. At the touch of the whip his horse bounded forward in a gallop along the shingly shore to the foot of the rapids. Craig was on his feet; his coat and shoes were flying off. No affair of his this either, yet must he hazard the life of an educated, cultured man for that of an unlettered savage. Who can stop to question "Why" at the word of duty? Not they who are bred in the purple of Nature's nobility.

He dove and found the limp body deep on the bottom of the circling pool. As he rose to the surface he felt the hungry fingers of the current clutching at his legs. Burdened by the boy's dead weight, for an instant the waters closed above his head. When again the sunlight met his eyes, with set teeth, he strained every muscle in a mighty effort to reach the shore. A breathless instant later he felt the bottom beneath his feet. Not a moment too soon had he mastered the warring elements, for as he stumbled ashore his own form was racked by a chilling cramp.

As he laid the brown, half-naked body on the grass he noted a great bruise on the lad's brow, where it had collided

with a rock. To all ordinary methods of resuscitation, the limp, inanimate figure gave no response. The boy was unconscious from the contusion on his head and not from any water he had swallowed.

Bearing the lad in his arms, Craig hurried across the fields to a nearby farm house, where with the help of a kindly-faced woman, he succeeded in bringing the boy back to consciousness. With scarcely a grunt of gratitude the young savage started away, apparently more deeply concerned about the recovery of his canoe than the misadventure that had befallen him. There had been no time in the excitement for mutual introductions.

"My name is Craig," he said simply. "I am the Laird's surveyor."

For an instant the woman regarded him with uneasy eyes, then as if finding something reassuring in his face, she responded quietly.

"This is the house o' John Mohr McIntyre. I am Mistress McIntyre." She was a woman of more than ordinary refinement, with wistful eyes and quaint old-world manners.

"Yer trimmlin' and chilled to the bone," she added. "Ye must put on some o' my son's dry clothes. Ye'd catch your death this chilly day to gang cross-country soppin' as ye be."

Indeed, the water seeping through Craig's garments had formed a pool about his feet on the well-kept floor. But it had no share in his thoughts. The home of the McIntyres! Was he to meet Flora?

A few moments later as he emerged from a bedroom attired in Peter's warm, homespun clothing, a trim figure darkened the doorway, and a voice gleeful and joyous cried between peals of laughter:

"Oh, mother—mother—guess the news. Old Duncan Duff is to marry Jane McGregor—and him old enough to be her granddaddy."

Seeing Craig, she stepped forward without embarrassment, and offered her hand.

"Welcome—welcome to our home," she cried. "I'm glad you have not stood on ceremony."

But Mrs. McIntyre, anxious to impart her sensation, quickly told the story of the boy's mishap.

But Craig was not listening. He stood gazing in wonderment at Flora McIntyre. She was radiant from a cross-country ride and flushed with the crisp autumn wind. Her hair was caught up under a small woollen tam-o'-shanter and her gown, though coarse of texture, was tight-fitting and smart. She was gloved and high booted, and carried a short riding whip.

Not until this moment had Barclay Craig dreamed that there could be a girl of this type in the settlement. He was not prepared for this metamorphosis from the badly frightened girl he had rescued from the hands of Allan Dhu. On that occasion she was dishevelled in person, humiliated in spirit and garbed in the habiliments of her daily household tasks—at untold disadvantage, attractive though he had deemed her. But to-day she was irresistible. She had ridden to the Flat Rapids Settlement, doubtless in the hope of getting word from Peter, or to enjoy the formality of going for the mail.

"It was Chief Mitchiwanimiki's son, you saved," she said. "You've made a friend for life,—across the lake—rescued the heir to the headship of the Ottawa nation. He'll not forget it either. Mitchiwanimiki—Big Thunder, is quite a character—a real Chief," she added, with a touch of irony.

Craig was silent and self-conscious. He was keenly aware that attired in Peter's clothing, which ill-fitted him, he made a grotesque figure. It was the marvel of this almost boyish, yet self-poised girl, that amazed and abashed him. Since leaving Montreal he had met with none but simple country folk, hard-working and honest men and women, but who bore painfully the unmistakable stamp of privation and isolation. One and all, they had been a far cry from the culture of the cities and his ideal of womanhood. But here was a new creature indeed, the woman of

his dreams, superb in homespun, at home in the wilderness.

Awkwardly he attempted to take his leave, but the girl's dancing eyes and insistent invitation decided him to remain. She had not referred to their previous meeting of which it seemed evident that she had spared her mother the painful knowledge but he guessed this thought was uppermost in her mind.

"Man—man, ye must hae supper wi' us," protested Mrs. McIntyre. "Ye'll hae to take pot-luck, but ye are verra welcome to what we hae."

It was a simple meal garnished by such delicacies as he dimly guessed his visit had occasioned. Mrs. McIntyre, with a significant look at Flora, mentioned briefly that Mr. McIntyre would not be home. Fine proud people were they who scorned to discuss their troubles, who made no apologies for their humble surroundings or their simple fare.

Flora took upon herself the burden of conversation. She was bright and vivacious, and again and again some merry quip, some sparkling witticism drove the shadows from her mother's face and wreathed it in smiles.

"Now," the girl said complacently, "you must wait till I do the dishes and then you can show me the scene of the day's adventure."

Mrs. McIntyre was off to her milking, and the two were alone. Craig's training could not reconcile him to a comfortable seat while his hostess stood. He held out his hand for the towel.

"This is a community of workers," he said. "I will wait, only if you will permit me to dry the dishes."

She laughingly consented.

"You brave little woman," he said artlessly, "so merry—so happy, in the midst of trouble."

Flora McIntyre's eyes darkened and for an instant their sparkle was dimmed.

"That is my part in the family duties," she said gravely, "while Peter storms, and mother worries, and father bears the brunt of it all, I—well I laugh and sing and comfort

mother, and boldly prophesy a bright ending to it all. Some one, you know, has to maintain the household spirit or we should all die of despair. I am the one that whistles along through the graveyard. I don't think, at the worst, that we are going to starve or freeze or have the roof burned over our heads."

They walked out into the clear starlit night, to the riverbank, where Craig pointed out the curving eddy from which he had rescued Mushel, the Indian chief's son.

The day had been sullen and chill, with lowering clouds and biting winds. But as it neared its end, it softened to a generous, golden sunset. Its breath was no longer harsh but sweet and balmy. Like an evil man grown kind with the approach of death, the day in the hour of its passing relented and had become benign. The autumn moon was big and open-faced and guileless. Jupiter, a lone diamond, pendant in the south, jeweled the sky. Up stream, armies of mist gathered and marched in endless procession. The night was filled with the voice of many waters, and somewhere below the rapids, some belated rivermen about their campfire, were singing a backwoods chant.

"I'm glad you came"—she said softly and seriously now, for the spell of the evening was on them both, and the death of the day was too impressive to be marred by merriment.

"I am glad," she went on, "even though you came by accident. I would rather you had called, as you promised Peter, but it is well to have you—even this way."

Craig listened amazed. Something about her had suggested innocent coquetry, and he was not prepared for this delightful artless candour.

"I have thought of you often, since—that day," she went on. "Oh! you were splendid—splendid, and I—am so awkward in trying to tell you how much I appreciate what you did for me, and how you stood by Peter that day at Kennell. He has written me all about it. Mother has never heard of my meeting with Allan Dhu and his rudeness. It

would only grieve her dear old heart, so I had to bide my time to thank you."

"Do you know," she continued musingly, "I am hardly sorry this happened. It was almost worth the indignity to find such a champion as you. Such a thing does not happen to many women. It was dramatic—mediæval—to see two men battling for me—engaged in actual physical combat."

"Alas," he said, with mock gravity. "I did not have the honour or good fortune to be fighting for you—more's the pity. You see I defended you on principle. Even had you not been the most beautiful, the most charming girl, I had ever seen, I would have fought just the same."

"And," he continued, with a quizzical glance at the girl, "having defended the principle and won, there was no sequel such as one reads of in books,—where—where, the knight's guerdon is the hand or the lips of his lady. Having done my simple duty I took to the road again."

Both laughed merrily. Flora seated herself on a boulder near the water's edge.

"Of course," she mused, carrying out the whimsical trend of the conversation. "Of course, the poor lady in the case not knowing aught of her defender was at a loss how to thank him. It was indeed but reasonable to suppose that so charming a cavalier, so doughty a knight would have already a lady-love in some far city. And what lady of modesty could proffer herself or her lips unsought."

She sat regarding him with smiling face and twinkling eyes. Craig looked at her in exasperation, then said daringly:

"She could have read desire in the burning kiss he pressed upon her hand. It was such a kiss as this."

Taking her hand, he quickly pressed it to his lips with a fervour that left no doubt of the intensity of his feelings.

Flora McIntyre drew away, almost frightened.

"'Twould seem ungrateful to be angry with you," she flashed. "But have a care, Mr. Craig, we simple country

girls are strangers to cavalier ways and hearts may be won that are not really wanted."

"You,—a simple country girl!" exclaimed Craig, incredulously. "No—no. There's not another like you in the grant. Where have you learned your arts? Where learned to toy with a man's heart as in the game of battle-door? How long have you lived here?"

"My parents came here ten years ago," the girl replied thoughtfully. "But I was delicate and after a year they placed me in school in Montreal. I am now twenty. At sixteen, I left the Convent and spent two years in the home of my mother's cousins by marriage,—the Olivieres. They are well-to-do people, of an old French-Canadian family and they were very good to me. In those two years I learned something of social customs and then—I came home. This is my home and my people and here I will stay. I will see this fight to the end. The Olivieres were anxious to have me remain, and father was willing, but my place is with my own folk. All my heart is in this struggle. Father is one of God's noblemen, and he is being wronged, Mr. Craig, not only wronged but persecuted. Whatever happens, Peter and I have pledged our word to one another never to leave the grant, but to stay and fight it out to the end. It may take years and years, but we must win in the end, not only for ourselves, but for all the clan. We will starve before we yield."

She was standing squarely before him now, her eyes flashing, her red lips parted, all of her tantalizing beauty enhanced by her passionate declaration of loyalty. She had told him much in a few words. She had explained away the mystery of her evident culture and self-possession. Educated in Montreal where bloomed the flower of Canadian womanhood—two years in the social life of the land's metropolis, which would qualify a woman for entry into any sphere—this was the answer to the seeming riddle.

Craig stood staring at her in silence. This little woman whom he had thought to patronize, for whose limitations he had been prepared to make allowance, whose isolation

he had begun to regret, was one who might give him some lessons not only in the amenities of social intercourse, but in the age-old game of hearts as well.

But most of all was he filled with admiration for the splendid ideal of loyalty on which her character was based. Here was a woman who had peeped through the portals of a higher life, who had drunk deep of the delights of finer living, and yet without complaint, without protest, at the call of duty, she had set her dainty shoulder against the grinding wheel of circumstance. He was lost in brow-puckering speculation.

Flora had risen and hands behind her, stood facing him.

"A penny for your thoughts," she asked mischievously.

"My thoughts of the last few moments," he said slowly, "I would not sell for a thousand, thousand pounds. For I have thought—that—I have met my fate. For the first time in my life, I have thought—that. My search is over, my ideal found. It may be that I shall be permitted to admire her only as a distant star, and to linger in the radiance of her rays, but distant though she may choose to be, she cannot stop me loving her.

"You wonderful, wonderful girl," he exclaimed as he came a step nearer. "I—I—I——"

A ripple of laughter cut short his words.

"Magnificent, bravo—bravo!" she cried, clapping her hands, and dancing merrily backwards. "You are a mummer in disguise. You did that splendidly—worthy of the great actor Macready himself. You did yourself proud." Her eyes were mocking, laughing, teasing.

"You think I jest," he demanded seriously.

"'Twould scarcely be wise," she bantered back, "for me to think otherwise, inasmuch as you have seen me but twice."

"But I love to hear you say it," she added, indulgently. "You spoke like a Hotspur."

They walked to her door, and arm in arm stood for a moment in silence. The man thrilled at the leaning pressure of her shoulder against his.

Lost in a whirlwind of emotion, he slipped his arm about her waist and drew her to him. For an instant, she remained motionless, her coiled hair resting against his chin, her face hidden. Then like a flash her head lifted and he felt the fairy touch of soft lips on his cheek.

"There," came the low whisper, as she sprang away from him. "You cannot say that I have not been grateful."

The closing of the door told that she was gone.

Walking home like a man in a dream, Barclay Craig tried to recall by what process of reasoning, he had decided that the struggle between the Chief and his clansmen was no affair of his.

CHAPTER VIII

A MIRRORED FUTURE

A LAMAN left—"Ladies' chain," shouted Murty McGonigal, his voice rising above the patter of pounding feet and the swish of rustling skirts.

The jovial Irishman attired in the well-cared-for long-tailed coat and knee-breeches of his grandfather was in the height of his glory, "calling off" for the country dance.

"Girruls in the centre—gints all round," he ordered as his buckled shoes beat out a wild tattoo on the puncheon floor. At his word of command, the maze of whirling figures dissolved and reformed, the girls in a central group, the young men, their hands joined in a ring merrily capering around them. From the fiddle of Narcisse Charbonneau, seated in a corner, streamed the enlivening strains of "The Irish Washerwoman."

For it was Halloween night, the one night of all the year when the belief of the time and the people filled the darkness with uncanny sights and sounds, the night when by charms and incantations, age-old and hoary, the portals of the future might be forced open, and through them the courageous and venturesome might gain a furtive peep. It was early for the Halloween games and the young folk of the Flat Rapids settlement gathered at the home of Amelia Graham were beguiling the time by a dance.

Amelia Graham herself sat at the hearth-side wrapped in an enveloping shawl, her vacuous eyes beaming happily on the whirling throng. A strange old woman was Amelia. Morose, one might have called her, had it not been for the amiable, childish smile that ever wreathed her face—a face

that in spite of its tell-tale marks of fifty years still held a lingering trace of youthful beauty. Halloween was the one night in all the year when she could with certainty be found at home in her cabin, half way between the Rapids and Arnprior.

For the most part she spent her time, wandering from house to house in the grant. Noiselessly would she slip in the door, smile in her meaningless way, and whisper:

"I hae come to bide a wee."

With the utmost deliberation she would remove her "visiting" dress of faded silk, and don the old calico gown, which she always carried in a wicker basket, and without further ado busy herself with some household task. A few days later some morning would find her gone as mysteriously and silently as she came.

That "the poor auld body was a bit daft" though harmless, was the general belief in the grant. In all its length and breadth but one person denounced her—Chancellor MacTavish. And he had not hesitated to brand her as a "damned witch." That she was possessed of some unearthly power, and possibly of second sight, few doubted. When big Peter McNiven, who lived nine miles from her cabin, cut his foot nearly in twain by a glancing blow with an axe, had not Amelia, who had some skill in nursing, mysteriously appeared with the muttered comment: "The word comes to me there is trubble in this house."

The older men of the grant while they were still far from upholding MacTavish in his contention, yet shook their heads dubiously when Amelia's name was mentioned. The two monstrous black cats, that arched their backs and spat viciously at every passer-by, the weeks when no sign of life could be seen about her cabin, but the calmly curling smoke from the chimney,—weeks when it was futile to seek entrance at her door, her lack of visible means of sustenance save a small garden and a few chickens—these things were capable of but one explanation, that Amelia Graham, in spite of her kindly life, spent at least a portion of her time in communion with the powers of Evil.

At such times when the old woman had secluded herself from the world, but one man had ever seen her face,—a shanty teamster who through the partly open door had glimpsed a visage so twisted in agony, so fraught with horror, that overcome with fright, he had fled precipitantly to tell his weird tale in the grog shops at Arnprior. And there were times even during her visits at the homes of the settlers when she seemed oblivious to all about her, sitting with half-closed eyes muttering surlily to herself.

But on the ears of the good-wives of the grant, all such stories fell unheeded. The odd little woman, who tended their crying babies, ministered to their sick, and prepared the bodies of their dead for their last resting-place, was no witch. And at their hospitable hearths, the aged wanderer was always sure of “a bit and a sup.” To Murty McGonigal alone there was naught inexplicable about Amelia Graham.

“‘Twas the good people,” he explained, “that have stole away the sowl av her.” The withered frame that wandered from house to house was, he believed, but a spiritless automaton.

“She may be a witch,” he said, when he heard of the Chancellor’s accusation, “but she’s the kind av a witch the good Lord loves, and that’s more than can be said for ould ‘Cracked Face’ at Kennell—may the Devil fly away with him in spite av the crucifix in his green-bag.”

But to the young folks, the growing lads and lasses of the township, Amelia was a source of fearsome delight. When she could be coaxed to talk, which was seldom, wild, weird tales she could relate of ghostly happenings in the old land—talks to which they listened half sceptically, half with creepy awe.

At least, they never doubted that to her the future was an open book. Had she not told Colin Farquaharson, two years ago, that he would “die betwixt wood and wave, betwixt sunset and sunrise”? And poor drunken Colin that very night was drowned while trying to cross the Madawaska on the floating logs.

Yet of her they had no personal fear, and every lad and lass looked forward eagerly to the annual Halloween gathering at her home. None was there who could so well advise them as to the time-honoured methods by which the secrets of the future could be laid bare as Amelia Graham. And while some were secretly incredulous, yet their Celtic love of the mysterious and the uncanny never failed each succeeding anniversary to fill her humble cabin full to overflowing.

The music had ended; the dance was over; the hands of the clock were creeping towards eleven.

"Can we pull the runts noo, Amelia?" asked Angus Campbell, a fat-faced serious boy.

The old woman nodded complacently. No faith lacked she in the ancient custom, that had come down to them from the dim days of their Pagan Pictish ancestors, that in the shape of the cabbage stalk plucked from the ground on Hallowe'en night, could be read the personal appearance and character of one's true love.

Hand in hand the line of young folks sidled out the door, every face serious except that of the florid Susie McDougall, who was giggling hysterically.

"Here, Flora—asthore," whispered Murty, not averse to assisting the fates, as bending over the frozen ground their hands met in the darkness. "Do you take this wan, 'tis straight and smooth."

Scampering back through the doorway, they pressed about Amelia. Gravely she scrutinized each stalk and gave her verdict. Sandy Morrison's withered selection meant an old and ill-favoured life partner. Angus Campbell sighed as she pronounced his stubby roughened choice, "a verra sharpt-tongued lassie, and unco' jealous."

"A fine lad, this one," Amelia said as she took the stalk from Flora's hand. "Straight, and tall, and weel favoured, the tocher will no be great," she added, as she touched the lump of earth adhering to its end, "but 'twull be enough, for much love wull gang wi' it."

"By damn, dis wan of mine have him a crack in it," mourned Narcisse.

"Ye wull marry wi' a widow lady," prophesied Amelia. Roars of laughter greeted the announcement. Murty pounded his comrade on the back and shouted,

"Be me sowl and I'll bet its that same widdy lady that keeps ye at Quyon manny's the Sunday till night time, munsheer."

Narcisse blushed and was silent.

"Scratched and scarred by muckle trouble, this one be," resumed Amelia, as another stalk was pressed into her hand, "but firm and straight. A proud man wull yours be, Ellen, but wi' an unco' good heart."

Ellen McPherson sank back in her seat with a little sigh. Then her quiet eyes for a moment met the livelier ones of Flora McIntyre, understandingly. Both were thinking of Peter in his cell in distant Perth.

"Noo, for the nuts," giggled Susie McDougall, when the interpretation of the cabbage stalks had been completed.

From the wooden bowl on the table each took two hazel nuts, named them with touching forefinger, and muttered words. As the stalks had told of the personality of the loved one, so would the "burning o' the nuts" warn them whether the way of their wooing would be smooth or stormy.

Was it the heat of the fire, that flushed the face of Flora McIntyre, as she placed the two nuts side by side on the coals? Or was it the memory of Barclay Craig "tall, straight and well favoured," indeed, who had stood between her and the distasteful caresses of Allan Dhù?

Seated in a semi-circle about the hearth they waited in silence. One of Murty's split wide open and bounced out of the fire.

"Lord, that mesilf," he muttered.

"She'll bang ye good, Murty," laughed Alex Stewart. The two set by Narcisse in the fire burned steadily to a

white ash, which Amelia prophesied to portend a long and happy married life.

"Which o' those two is your true love, lassie?" Amelia asked of Flora.

"Yon—the nearest is myself."

Even as she spoke, the farthest nut snapped from its place half-way across the coals.

"Too bad, lassie," came from the watchers. "He'll quit ye, Flora."

"Bide-a-wee, bairns, ye canna tell," warned Amelia. Flora's face showed her deep concern.

Again the nut snapped, jumped about uncomfortably for a moment and then slid deliberately back to its mate. A chorus of congratulations followed.

"Ye came together again. Dinna forget that, lassie. Ye'll be sore pressit by trouble, but 'twull pass away. Note, lassie, how they burn—red wi' the fire o' love." Peacefully, the two were nestling to each other in the ruddy glow.

In silence they sat, following the unfolding of their fates in the fiery coals. Some of the nuts sank sedately to ashes, others glowed long and brilliantly, several splintered into fragments, others rolled recklessly out on the floor, foretelling sudden separation. When all had been consumed, Amelia produced a tray of red-cheeked apples.

"Now for the letthers," chuckled Murty. "Sure we used to do this back in Galway."

Every lad and lass was soon peeling an apple keeping the skin in one long unbroken coil, a process which must be completed in silence, else would the charm be broken.

One by one they stepped to the middle of the room and threw the long peeling over their left shoulders. Alex Stewart's formed on the floor a coiling letter "S" and Susie McDougall, bantered and teased by the others, hid her blushes and her giggles in Flora's shoulder. But Alex, as became a man, was soberly serious, but with something of pride of possession in his dark eyes as he glanced meaningfully at Susie.

"'Tis an 'O'—No, 'tis a 'C,'" murmured Flora McIntyre, as she gazed at the apple peeling she had just thrown.

"'Tis a 'C,'" confirmed Amelia.

"Carmichael—Andy Carmichael," they shouted in glee as they noted her reddened cheek.

"'Tis not Andy Carmichael," returned Flora, with a little moue.

"Straight, tall and well-favoured," ever the words were running in her mind, and with them the fervid exclamation of Barclay Craig, "You wonderful, wonderful girl."

"Murther—murther—for the love av God—look at Amelia," cried Murty.

The old woman's hands were clenched, her eyes upturned, the whites alone visible; her face was ashy grey, her mouth had fallen open. Over her they bent in earnest solicitude. Murty chaffing her hands, while Flora pressed a cup of water to her lips. But seemingly recovering herself, Amelia sat suddenly upright and warned them away with a wave of her hand.

"Let me be," she rasped in tones so harsh and angry, so utterly unlike her usual submissive whisper that they drew away, standing in an awe-struck ring about her chair. Yet there was no surprise in their faces. They recognised the symptoms. Amelia was having one of her strange spells in which she had been known to utter half-intelligible prophecies.

The old woman leaned back in her chair, the firelight gleaming on her half-covered eyeballs, her face a frozen mask, except for the thickly muttering lips.

"The word hae come, I must speak, let me be," she snapped.

For a space there was no sound in the room save the crackling of the fire, and the smothered breathing of the listeners.

"Years—and years, and still years," the still figure in the chair intoned. "Gone are the woods, but for a bit here and there. Still broad and blue lies the lake, still sings the river

wi' the logs on its frothy bosom. But by the clachan* is the scream o' many mills, and houses—a wheen o' houses, and many folk, hurryin' to and fro—and 'tis true—'tis true," her voice rose almost to a hoarse shout. "He is gone for aye—the Laird is gone and a MacLachlan sits in the seat o' the McNab."

Her head fell sidewise. Then her eyes opened and with a tired sigh she sat upright and looked about her, her face wreathed in its usual meaningless smile.

"I hae gang to sleep for a bit, bairns, I be but a tired auld woman," she apologised.

Amelia was herself again, and they all noted with relief that she seemed none the worse for her strange experience. But they sat silent, thrilled with the thought of her prophetic words. McGonigal was the first to recover himself.

"I wonder now," he said, as he grinned and rubbed the end of his nose. "I wonder wud that be Big Dan MacLachlan, the freighter."

A unanimous shout of laughter greeted the sally. Big Daniel MacLachlan, the stalwart, honest, outspoken, two-fisted Highlandman, who carried on a thriving business freighting new settlers up the Ottawa river—the man, who since his quarrel with him, the Laird had hated relentlessly. Big Dan in the seat of the McNabs. Its utter impossibility touched the ridiculous.

"Is there no a way, Amelia, to see one's true love's face?" inquired Angus Campbell, when the laughter had subsided.

"Aye," responded Amelia. "But 'tis a fearsome thing to do. Ye must gang at midnight to where two roads cross and whilst ye comb your hair, ye must look in a glass. Then take six steps backward, callin' the while, three times, 'Come to me, my true love, come to me,' and ye wull see the face o' your true love in the glass."

"'Tis so—be Garrah. Shure we used to do that in Galway," put in Murty. "Wanst whin I was rakin' away at me head, and be the powers I saw"—he stopped suddenly.

* Village.

"What, Murty—what was it?" asked several breathlessly.

"A red head with horns on it," he stoutly averred. But his eyes were twinkling roguishly.

"Horns—a red head—wi' horns on it," they exclaimed fearfully.

"Feigs, 'twas the deil himsal," whispered Angus Campbell.

Murty's mischievous glance swept the room; every eye intent with eagerness was fixed on his face. Then as his deep chest heaved with suppressed merriment,

"'Twas me mother's red heifer," he announced.

Flora McIntyre alone did not join in the shout of laughter that greeted the anti-climax of Murty's experience. Her eyes were dancing with the reckless spirit of adventure. She shot a swift glance at the clock.

"It is two minutes to twelve. I will do it," she declared as she sprang to her feet.

The young folks burst into a babble of warning protests. To engage in mystic sports in a lighted room, in the protecting company of others was safe adventure, but to fare forth alone into the haunted darkness of a Halloween night, when kelpies and bogies were said to be abroad—to walk backward into unknown dangers was foolhardy recklessness at the thought of which they trembled.

"I'm not afraid," maintained the girl, as she detached a bit of broken mirror glass from the wall, let down her coils of lustrous black hair, and stepped boldly into the frosty autumn night.

In a moment she had gained the cross-roads. Over head the moon sailed peacefully, lighting up the long yellow stretch of sandy road. But beneath the spreading branches of the pines about was pitchy black.

Thrilled with superstitious fear, in spite of her brave words of but a moment ago, quivering with excitement, her heart was pounding wildly in her ears, as she stepped backward, the glass held in front of her at arms length, the comb sweeping through her unbounded tresses.

"Come to me, my true love—come to me," she muttered.

But the square of glass a foot in front of her face reflected nothing but her own winsome countenance. She did not see the horseman hidden by the darkness, beneath the pines but a few yards away.

For a moment the man scrutinized the woman's strange actions curiously, then he dropped silently from his horse, and creeping nearer peeped from behind the tree-trunk.

A second time the girl was stepping backward, now towards the tree, repeating the words of the charm. The man started at the sound of the voice and the darkness hid his quick mischievous smile, as he recognised the time-honoured Halloween custom.

Again Flora was moving slowly backwards, and this time there was impatience and incredulity in her voice, as she pleaded in a louder tone,

"Come to me, my true love—come to me."

One noiseless step from behind the tree-trunk and for a fleeting instant, the man gazed over her shoulder. His face was fairly reflected in the glass.

With a gasp of fear, the girl dropped the mirror, covered her eyes with her hands and stood trembling. Then she whirled about. Nothing met her gaze but the dark towering pines and the empty stretch of moonlit road. The man was hidden behind the tree, hardly three feet away.

Terrified by the astounding result of her experiment, she ran panting to the house, to throw herself into the arms of Amelia Graham. Around her the young folks crowded, wild with curiosity.

"What was it—what did ye see, Flora?"

Still panting with excitement, she shook her head. As she recovered her composure, they plied her with repeated questions, but none could penetrate her smiling silence.

And Barclay Craig, riding on through the moonlit night to Kennell Lodge, was whistling merrily.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIERY CROSS

INDIAN summer had come to McNab.

Bare and leafless the beeches and elms lifted their lace-like tracery against the leaden sky. Still gloomy and unchangeable stood the pines, but the foliage of the maples, touched by the fairy fingers of the frost, had burst into a gorgeous, bewildering riot of colour. Flaming masses of gold and crimson, vivid splotches of orange and scarlet, they were singing the swan song of the dying summer, ere the icy breath of winter wrapped their sombre trunks in shrouding wreaths of snow.

Murty McGonigal replaced the horse shoe in the coals and leaned back with one heel set against the edge of the stone-built forge. Above the fiery-hued maples in the hollow he could glimpse, through the pointed pine-tops, the blue gleam of the distant lake, and further away the long, low swell of the Laurentian hills. The crisp chill of the newly fallen snow was fresh on the morning air.

"Glory be," said Murty, as he breathed deep, and his eye softened. "'Tis a wonderful land—a land, be Garrah, that a man could live and die in—could love and fight for—'tis that."

"Malcolm, me bye," he said to his apprentice, a tall rawboned stripling. "Wud ye be after lukin' at that now?" He waved his hand towards the incarnadined maples.

"Wud ye be after lukin' at that? And still there's folks that won't belave in the good people. Shure 'tis haythen they are intirely. 'Tis mighty busy, the little lads were last night."

The figure of a horseman darkened the door of the

smithy and Duncan Cameron, his garments mud-spattered, dropped from the saddle. The old man's eyes were bright and joyous, and his deep lined face was set in a smirk of satisfaction.

"Back alriddy, Duncan? Are the Assizes over? What did they do to Pater at Perth?" Murty queried eagerly.

Very deliberately Cameron was lifting a blazing splinter to the bowl of his pipe, but his countenance was gleaming with suppressed excitement.

"The lad got aff—clean aff," he chuckled. "De'il a thing did they do to him at all. Peter rode wi' me as far as Snedden's. He'll be home the night."

"Howly Moses," gasped Murty. "Pater out av jail—and free. Ye—don't—say—so. Wo-o-o-w," he yelled exultantly. "'Tis wanst annyway, the Ould Tarrier gets the hot end av the tongs. And how in the divil did it ever happen?"

"'Twas all owin' to the legal ignorance o' MacTavish," Cameron snorted venomously. "Him plead a case in Latin, heugh—he couldna plead one in the Queen's English, in broad Scots nor in Gaelic, either. The Magistrates wouldna listen at all to MacTavish's committment papers. They were no regular—no properly writ. And the Laird thinks he is larned in the law. Heugh."

Such was the case. The board of magistrates, though composed of half-pay army officers, all of them cronies and political friends of the Laird, yet in the face of the fact that the Chief had acted, at the preliminary examination of Peter McIntyre, both as judge and accuser, could do nothing but declare the committment illegal.

"And ye were there—ye heard it all?" queried the astonished McGonigal.

"Aye, that I did, every word o' it. The case was fair laughed out o' court."

Cameron did not tell Murty that the sole reason for his own long ride to Perth was to protect Peter McIntyre. If the young man had been found guilty Duncan had de-

terminated to confess in open court, his own authorship of the anonymous letter.

"By Garrah," grinned Murty. "'Twill be a smack in the face for the Ould Tarrier. May the Lord send him more av the same."

"Aye, and for MacTavish. Murty," Duncan said impressively, "I hae a strange suspection about the Laird and if it be true, wi'in a month auld Duncan Cameron will hold both him and the Chancellor in the hollow o' his hand."

Murty said nothing. He had drawn the iron from the fire, and his hammer was clanging on its glowing surface, sending the sparks showering. As he soused it in the water bucket, he shot a quick, searching glance at Cameron. No, it was not the idle boasting of intoxication; the man was perfectly sober, and Duncan Cameron, sober, was a man who measured his words.

Malcolm McPherson, pumping stolidly on the bellows sweep of the other forge, glowered darkly at Duncan from under his black brows. His father, Fergus McPherson, was a loyal supporter of the Laird, and the son shared his father's sentiments.

"That's a damned lie, Duncan Cameron," he snorted incredulously.

Before Cameron could frame an answer, a young man raced into the open door of the smithy. Save for his deerskin moccasins, he was attired in the Highland garb, and his red face and panting breath told of long continued physical exertion.

"Take the cross—the gathering place is Johnstone's Rock to-morrow at noon," he gasped as he held out a cross of burnt and blackened twigs.

"Gwan, Angus," sniffed Murty, as he turned his back on the courier and busied himself with the fire. "'Tis nayther Scotchman nor clansman I am, thank the Lord."

"I'm too auld, Angus," protested Cameron.

But on the ears of Malcolm McPherson the appeal had not fallen in vain. He dropped his hammer, untied his leathern apron and cast it on the floor. Pausing for a

moment to tighten his belt, he snatched the blackened cross from the waiting Angus, and darted out the door.

As in the old days in the Highlands, when for council or foray the chieftains of the North summoned their armed clansmen from hill and strath, so now the head of the expatriated clan was calling his kinsmen to council at Johnstone's Rock.

On through the endless forest ran Malcolm McPherson, stopping only to hallo to men ploughing in the clearings or to shout his message at a cabin door—on and on—till three long miles had fallen behind him and the cross passed to the hands of another.

From the door of Kennell Lodge, through the village of Arnprior, north along the lake road, to the settlement at Braeside, and still on to the inn of Alex McDonald at Sand Point, then past the cabins of Loch Winnoch, through the long unbroken stretches of the North Bush, south to Burnstown and the White Lake settlement, down the river to the Flat Rapids—so from hand to hand sped the Fiery Cross.

There were not wanting those who scoffed and sneered, many secretly, a few openly—others beside McIntyre and McFarlane, who had suffered at the hands of the Chief—who had been dragged by doubtful legal processes to the court at distant Perth, much to their annoyance and financial loss—till they had lost every vestige of regard for their hereditary Chief.

But to the majority, though in their hearts they sympathised with those whom the Laird had dubbed "his black sheep," yet was the summons one a Highlander would hesitate to disobey. In the sight of the ancient symbol, that had sent their fathers faring forth to many a bloody battlefield, was that which thrilled each Scottish heart with the memory of a proud and glorious past. For in spite of all, the McNab was still their chief, the actual living representative of the honoured family for which their forefathers had fought and suffered since the days of Malcolm Canmore.

The object of the meeting they did not know. Possibly the Chief had relented in the matter of the road-money, or wished to announce new plans for the development of the grant. Rumour had it that a grist-mill was to be erected at White Lake. All were anxious to know.

And so they came, to a man—all save John and Peter McIntyre and James McFarlane—on foot and horseback, up and down the Madawaska, their eager interest concealed under their Caledonian taciturnity—to the rendezvous at Johnstone's Rock, where the river swept in a wide curve about a massive boulder, but a hundred yards away from the home of John Mohr McIntyre,

Nearly two hundred of them were lounging on the grass in the open clearing by the river side, smoking and chatting when the sound of the bag-pipes drifting through the forest announced the approach of the Chief. A few moments later, McNee, his pipes pealing "The McNabs' Gathering," walked from out the woodland path. Close behind him rode the Chief and Allan Dhu. The assemblage rose to their feet, and touched their hats, a salute which the Chief gravely returned.

As the quick glance of the Laird noted their number, his proud face softened in a gratified smile. But he frowned darkly a moment later as his eye fell on Murty McGonigal. The Irishman had kept his seat, and with pipe set in his mouth at an aggressive angle was regarding the proceedings with an amused smile.

The Laird had never come into conflict with the smith, yet instinctively he disliked and distrusted the man. McGonigal was now one of the few in the grant over whom he had no control. A few days after Craig's arrival, Murty had abandoned his location at the Flat Rapids settlement, and his new smithy (close to the joint home of Narcisse and himself) he had purchased outright from its previous owner to whom the McNab in the early years of the grant had given a complete title.

Moreover, there had come to the ears of the Chief rumours of Murty's remarks concerning himself, and on

the few occasions when the two had come face to face, there had been noticeable in the manner of the Irishman a lack of deference which was somewhat annoying to the proud spirit of the McNab.

Mounting a stump, the Laird removed his bonnet, and addressed them as "kinsmen and brothers." He thanked them for their loyal response to the call of the Fiery Cross, and assured them that he would not have summoned them from their daily tasks, had it not been a matter of importance.

"Weel, ye ken," he went on, "that treason is abroad in the land,—treason, and veiled rebellion, hiding itself under the hypocritical name o' reform. It is indeed a time, my clansmen, when it behooves every Scotsman to stand firm by the rulers o' the land in all things, a time for them to set their faces firm as a flint against all they who would counsel discontent wi' them set in authority over ye, or wi' the laws made for the governing o' the colony."

A few of the older men started a ripple of applause, but for the most part the clansmen listened in silence. Murty McGonigal, standing a little apart from the meeting, his shoulder against a tree, wore a scrutinizing expression on his frank, ruddy face.

"I wondther now," he soliloquised, "what it is that the Ould Tarrier has up his sleeve."

That the Laird's wordy preamble was but the preface to some startling move, he was convinced. But if his object were to effect the capture of either McIntyre or McFarlane, he would fail, for both, Murty knew, were safely hidden miles away.

"Ye ken," continued the Chief, "that those scunnerls Papineau and MacKenzie in the houses o' Parliment hae been for months frothing sedition agin Her Majesty the Queen, and instilling discontent into the minds o' the people, and I am sorry to say that right here in my own township, there be they who by their actions hae shown me they are rebels at heart—they who hae defied me, their Chief and lawful magistrate, and who hae by devious

means avoided the processes o' the law. The time has come, my kinsmen, when the majesty and power o' the courts must be vindicated."

He paused for an instant to note the effect of his words. Not only Murty but many of the clansmen were smiling quietly. A search warrant might give the Laird access to the homes of McIntyre and McFarlane, but he would find neither.

"Ye wull see that this day," he resumed, "that wull show to all o' ye the folly o' opposition to your Chief and the Government."

"McNee," he called. "Blow your chanter."

As the three short notes echoed through the woods, came the pounding of hoofs, and a dozen mounted men headed by a constable trotted into the open.

"Here is your authorization, Mr. Madigan," remarked the Chief, as he handed the officer a folded document.

Their faces still radiant with anticipatory glee at the coming discomfiture of the Chief and his henchmen, the younger clansmen gazed smilingly at the constable's posse as they rode over to the homestead of John McIntyre.

But to the surprise of all, they trotted past the door of the house, and halted in front of the stables.

"God save us," exclaimed Alex Stewart, "'Tis John Mohr's cattle they're after."

Stewart was right. It was not a search warrant the Chief had handed to Madigan, but a writ of execution for the seizure of the live-stock of John McIntyre, secured from a pliant magistrate in the neighbouring township of Fitzroy. It was for this that the Fiery Cross had sped through wood and clearing. Foiled in his attempts to capture the "black sheep," the Laird had determined to reduce them to poverty by the seizure of their horses and cattle. While several of the posse were leading the horses from the stable, others were engaged in rounding up the cows from the adjacent field.

As the meaning of the Chief's move flashed upon the spectators their Scottish impassiveness gave way to mut-

tered comments of disapproval. Even in the faces of the older men anxiety and astonishment were evident. Without horses to do his winter logging and his fall ploughing the plight of McIntyre and his family would be dire indeed. Even Sandy Fisher as he tugged at his long beard murmured in a breaking voice:

"'Tis no right for the Laird. 'Tis cruel—'tis cruel. 'Tis all the doin' o' that de'il MacTavish."

"Aye," blurted out Alec Stewart. "'Tis but faint-hearted loons we be—were I Peter McIntyre, I'd take the law in mine own hands."

"Lad, ye're crackin' like a fool," retorted Fergus McPherson. "Like a rebel and traitor. The McNab's the Chief, forbye a magistrate and the law's the law. Though," he added, "I'm no denying 'tis hard—'tis hard."

Slowly the cattle and horses were being urged past the door of the house, when it opened and the slim grey figure of Mrs. McIntyre, broom in hand, stood gazing in amazement at the cavalcade.

"Where be ye takin' our beasties?" she demanded.

"They be seized by the order of the Court," explained the constable.

"On wi' them—hold your clavers, woman," ordered the Chief, who had stepped towards the doorway.

For a moment Mrs. McIntyre gazed at them in speechless indignation, then in her faded eyes flashed the spirit of her grandfather who had died at Culloden. Rushing at the nearest of the posse she belaboured him over the head with the broom, screaming in her native Gaelic,

"Ye robbers—ye robbers."

"Seize yon woman," commanded the Chief.

In a twinkling, two of the deputies wrenched the broom from her grasp. For a moment they held the half-hysterical woman by the wrists, as they glanced enquiringly at the Laird.

"Put her under arrest. She has resisted the orders o' the court," he directed.

"Unhand her—let her be—shame—shame!" came from

the younger men in the crowd who were now surging nearer and nearer the door. Already the mounted constables were urging their horses against the foremost in an effort to force them back.

"Look—look at the lass. She has gone daft," gurgled Sandy Fisher.

He was staring at the open doorway, where stood Flora McIntyre, a musket in her hands. The girl's face was pale, but two red spots glowed on her cheeks and the light of a desperate courage glinted from her dark eyes.

Awed by the dramatic nature of the scene, a hush had fallen on the spectators, while the clear voice of the dauntless girl, strangely like Peter's in its clarion tones, rang out so that all might hear.

"Men of McNab, who call this tyrant your Chief, know the truth. With my father a fugitive, my brother in prison, my mother in the hands of his constables, only I am left to vindicate the family honour of the McIntyres, and tell you why this sickening scene is enacted here to-day. Because I scorned the hand of his blackguard son, Allan Dhu, because I refused to leave this humble home to become the mistress of Kennell Lodge, because my father flung in the teeth of the McNab himself the 'tocher' with which he would buy me into loveless wedlock, for this does the Chieftain of your clan seek to beggar us."

She paused for breath. Marvellously beautiful in her disarray, her hair had fallen about her shoulders and tossed in the autumn breeze. Flashing eyes, crimson cheeks and heaving bosom heightened her charm to queenly radiance, as she stood, a woodland Joan of Arc, unmaking, instead of making a king.

"I—to be kin of his son's nameless foundlings," she cried. "I—a McIntyre, who some months ago Allan strove to make his mistress—a hireling courtesan in Montreal. He had the effrontery to ask of me to leave my father and mother, and share with him a life of gilded vice in the city. This—this is the stock ye touch your bonnets to,—

these the honourable gentlemen to whom ye cringe and fawn."

After the pompous and kingly attitude of the Chief, the climax of the girl's tale came like a bombshell. With Allan Dhu's many profligacies they were well acquainted, but that he had attempted to add the city-bred daughter of John McIntyre to his list of lustful conquests seemed almost beyond belief. But each clansman, even if he doubted the girl's tale, had a rich morsel of gossip to take home to his good wife; the story would spread like wild fire. Every eye was turned enquiringly on the Chief. In spite of his attempt to hide his discomfiture by a scornful smile, they could not fail to note that his ruddy countenance had faded to a paler hue.

Yet while many recognised that such an attempt on the part of Allan Dhu was not an impossibility, the girl's statement that she and her father had refused Allan Dhu's offer of lawful wedlock met with scant credence. The McIntyres refuse to enter into a matrimonial alliance with the family of the McNab—it was unbelievable. Already many were shaking their heads.

The doubt in their faces had not escaped the keen eyes of the girl. It was a doubt that her next words scattered to the winds, as though she had quoted Holy Writ.

"If ye doubt me," she cried, falling for a moment into the vernacular of her childhood, "gang ax Meenster Freer who heered my feyther order the McNab from the house."

Then, in fury uncontrollable, she raised the gun to her shoulder and aimed it at the burly breast of the Chief, not ten feet away.

"Have your men take their hands off my mother, Chief McNab, or I draw the trigger," she cried.

At that moment Murty McGonigal, who unnoticed had squeezed his way between the horses of the posse, suddenly leaped towards the door, wrenched the weapon from her and firmly but kindly pushed her within.

"Let the woman go," he ordered the constables. Hesitating for a moment they obeyed. Mrs. McIntyre still

sobbing, staggered in the door. Murty drew it shut behind her and set his back against it.

"Arrest that damned Irishman. Take him to the Lodge wi' the women. Break down the door," ordered the Laird. But there was something lacking in his tone of command and there was no movement among the members of the posse. To carry out the orders of the court in regard to the seizure of the cattle they were willing, but to face a loaded gun in the hands of a determined man was another matter. Though armed, they had no desire for bloodshed.

McGonigal held up his hand for silence. His manner as he addressed the Chief was strangely deferential. He was smiling now, and in his blue eyes was a whimsical light.

"Chief McNab, now for what, be Garrah, would ye be arrestin' me—and me just after savin' your life? That gurrul wouldn't have missed ye anny more than the bear she shot last spring. Sure ye can't arrest me. I don't owe ye anny money, and I've done nawthin' agin ye. I haven't opposed the orthers of the court. Take the cows for all I care, but ye can't take the women."

"Seize him—Madigan," ordered the Chief. "We hae had enough o' this senseless clashin'."

But the men hesitated. In spite of his smiling face and good-humoured words, there was that in the eyes of the Irishman which gave them pause. The cattle had been secured, beyond that they had no authorization.

"The man is right, Chief," protested Madigan. "We have the cattle. What good is there in bothering with the women?"

"Laird av McNab," said Murty, with something of dignity. "'Twud be a divil av a big mistake for you to take the women to Kennell. 'Twud be a nice story to be tould in York and Montreal that Chief McNab warred on women—on helpless women folk. He would be the first of his race that ever did so. 'Tis trouble enough ye'll have explainin' away the girl's tale we've just listened to, I'm thinkin'."

Across the face of the Chief flooded a wave of red.

Where defiance and resistance would have maddened him, Murty's appeal to his pride of name had had its effect. Something of admiration showed in the keen appraising glance he shot at the Irishman.

"Let the wenches gang," he ordered, after a moment's pause. "You are right, Madigan, we hae the cattle—'tis enough. McGonigal, do ye come to Kennell sometime during the next week, I hae much to say to ye. I'm no answerin' to a lassie's prattle here," he continued, partly to the crowd.

Murty chuckled. Quickly he divined the purpose of the Chief's invitation—to enlist him in his interest in the struggle against the settlers.

"I thank ye kindly, Chafe, and the same to you," he grinned. "'Tis about the same distance from Kennell to me cabin as 'tis from me cabin to Kennell. Sure I'd be plazed to have ye come over anny time and drink a cup av tay with a descendant av the kings av Ireland."

With a contemptuous snort the Chief turned away. His departure had none of the pomp of his coming.

In silence the clansmen watched the cavalcade disappear among the pines. There were young men whose eyes were flashing, whose lips were muttering curses, but many, in fact nearly every family, were beholden financially to the McNab, and there were those among them whom they knew would carry any indiscreet utterance direct to Kennell Lodge. All were cowed into apparent submission—all save Alec Stewart, who was recklessly cursing the Chief in guttural Gaelic.

But though they had just witnessed a proof of the power of the Laird, so complete and convincing that either criticism or resentment seemed useless, yet the girl's words had made a profound impression and something of her fearless spirit had sunk deep into their hearts. From that hour sentiment in favour of the Chief weakened, and though the habit of centuries was not easily overcome and appearances were duly maintained, the feeling of personal loyalty to the McNab as head of the clan received a blow

from which it never recovered. The Laird had won, the cattle were seized, but all felt that far better for him had the Fiery Cross never sped forth on its deceptive errand.

Slowly sank the sun behind the tree-tops; the green of the encircling woods faded to the dusky grey of the long Canadian twilight. Still sat Murty McGonigal on the doorstep of the McIntyre home, his unlit pipe forgotten in his mouth, the gun across his knees, his brow wrinkled in troubled thought. From the darkness within came the gentle voice of Flora as she strove to comfort her weeping mother.

It was well after dark, when the hammering of hoofs on the corduroy road came to Murty's ears. Laying aside the gun, he hurried to the rail fence. As Peter McIntyre dropped from his horse with a glad word of greeting, the Irishman took him silently by the arm and led him a few paces down the road out of earshot of the house.

"Is there aught wrong?" asked Peter, sensing something strange in the unusual demeanor of the other.

"Pater—now Pater—promise me that ye will kape that divil's timper av yours in check," Murty warned before he told the story of the day's happenings.

"By the God above," Peter was almost sobbing with rage, "'twas the doin' o' Allan Dhu. He wull die this very night. I'll stand it no longer."

"Whist ye now, ye crazy bye," protested the smith, as he held the struggling McIntyre by the lapels of his coat. "Ye can do nawthin' alone. Now will ye listen to an oulder and a wiser man?"

For fully ten minutes, Murty's whispered talk ran on. He was enumerating name after name, to each of which Peter murmured assent.

"Now, by Garrah," he concluded. "There's twenty av the likeliest lads in the grant. With black clouts over our faces on a dark night, we can put the fear av the Lord into the heart av the Ould Tarrier. Let us be after strikin' now, when the iron is hot. Ride be the Madawaska and I'll ride be the lake to Braeside and Sand Point. Tell them

to meet with us in Morrison's ould cabin near Blaisdell's Bay, when the moon goes down. Tell your women good-bye and start at wanst."

The high-sailing moon gazed down in wonder at the dark figures of the horsemen, that in the midnight hours came galloping by twos and threes along the winding roads of the grant towards the deserted cabin, by the lonely bay, a mile above Kennell Lodge.

As Murty rode from cabin to cabin, from clearing to clearing, he was chuckling audibly to himself.

"'Tis the same ould fight, by Garrah—like the Peep o' Day byes in Ireland. The same ould fight,—the poor agin the rich, the weak agin the strong—the opprist agin the opprissor. And Murty McGonigal and the Black Byes will do their part or I'm a Dutchman."

For the first time the Laird of McNab was to meet with organised but secret opposition—an opposition welded together by the fiery spirit of Peter McIntyre, and guided by the wily brain of Murty McGonigal, but primarily inspired by a picture of beautiful and persecuted womanhood in the person of Flora McIntyre.

CHAPTER X

THE FIRST BLOW

ON the gauntleted hands and cloaked figure of the horseman fell gently and noiselessly a wealth of winter's first heavy snow. Barclay Craig and his horse were crested and fringed with nature's royal ermine.

It was close to midnight. The crescent moon that during the early evening hours had sailed peacefully through a fleckless firmament was now hidden in the west behind a blanket of clouds; the grey sky overhead showed not a solitary star.

Faster and thicker grew the snowfall, till the world about was blotted out. Not a breath of wind was stirring, but the night had turned bitterly cold. Winter had come, as it comes so often in the far North, not with storm and bluster, but silently and stealthily. Already the evergreens were weighted with their immaculate burdens.

Craig urged his horse through the rapidly growing mounds. He was tired and anxious to reach the warmth and shelter of Kennell Lodge. All day long he had been in the saddle, inspecting the work of the road-cutters in the North Bush. Though the trail was now hidden by the circumscribing wall of falling flakes, he had but little anxiety about his directions. To his left lay the lake, and the level shore once reached, he could follow it to the foot of the terraced hill, where stood Kennell Lodge a mile away.

Quitting the road, he pushed on through the obscurity towards the muffled murmur of the lake, when a scarlet gleam—the square of a lighted window—caught his eye.

"Halt," rang out a firm voice from the shadows.

Hardly ten feet away, the dimly seen figure of a man was covering him with a musket.

"Give the password," demanded the unknown.

Astounded, the surveyor hesitated for a moment.

"I know no password, my good fellow," he responded.

"Sandy—Archie—here to me—a spy," shouted the sentry.

Through the curtain of falling flakes about them sprang three men. While the first held the reins of Craig's struggling horse, the others threw themselves on him in a determined effort to drag him from his saddle.

"Damnation—what does this mean?" cried Craig, as he brought the butt of his light riding-whip down on the nearest head. "Unhand my horse."

No response came from his assailants. Strong hands grasped him by legs and waist, and all four went to the ground in a struggling heap. He found himself lying on his back, floundering in the soft snow, half smothered by the press of bodies above him.

"Let me up," he gasped, "who are you?"

"Let the lad arise—till we look at him," ordered the leader.

Once again on his feet, the surveyor flamed hotly at the indignity of the assault. Quickly he lashed out with his fist; the man who had just spoken went reeling backward into the snow. But in a flash the clinging arms of the others were about him, and in spite of his frantic struggles he was again overpowered and thrown to the ground, his hands tied and a scarf bound securely over his eyes.

"Ye damned spy," shouted the leader, as he rubbed his aching jaw, "I hae half a mind to——"

"You are a liar," retorted Craig, now boiling with rage. "I'm Barclay Craig, the Chief's surveyor."

"Sacre, Mon Dieu," broke in a soft voice, in accents of surprise. "It is—it is de surveyor man. Ma fren's—better hol' on a bit. Les' tak' him to de house. Archie, bring his horse."

As Craig's footsteps crossed the threshold, he could

feel the sudden warm radiance of the roaring fire in the hearth. The shuffle of feet and the sound of restless movements about him told him that the room was half-filled with men. But blindfolded as he was he could not see the warning motion of the hand, with which Narcisse stilled the sudden exclamations of surprise, which had greeted his own unexpected presence.

He was quite collected now, the flush of anger at the unjustifiable attack on his person had passed and he was now coolly considering the situation. That his assailants were neither highwaymen nor outlaws he was convinced; his watch and the money in his pocket had been undisturbed. Who were these men who regarded him as a spy, and upon whose secret rendezvous he had stumbled? But one voice did he recognise, that of Narcisse Charbonneau, whose humble but gracious hospitality he had once shared. That the French-Canadian would ever consent to harm him he did not believe. Could it be that the hewer was a secret emissary of Papineau, the agitator? He now recalled that the latest papers from Montreal had accused both Papineau and MacKenzie of secretly plotting armed rebellion. Could it be that their activities had penetrated as far as the upper Ottawa? It was highly probable; nowhere had the people more cause for complaint than in the domains of the Laird of McNab.

Above the subdued whisperings rose an angry voice. "Surveyor or no surveyor—he's a spy o' the Lairds, I'm tellin' ye. He was lookin' at the cabin, when we took him."

"Ye damned sneaking spy," went on the voice. "Can ye give any good reason why we should no be dropped in the lake wi' a stone about your neck."

"Certainly," was Craig's cool response. "Two reasons. First, I would be drowned and you, my murderers, would certainly be hanged. If those are not enough, I might add that I am no spy. I am Barclay Craig, the Chief's surveyor, on my way home from the North Bush. Who you are, I do not know, but ye have the manners of highwaymen."

"Hol' on—hol' on," came the warning voice of Charbonneau. "Go a leetle slow. Me, I know dis man. I know he speak him de truth. I not tink he is wan spy. We shall attend till de oders come."

The creaking of the door announced new arrivals. As they entered, stamping the clinging snow from their feet, Craig could hear their low exclamations of surprise at the sight of himself seated bound and blindfolded by the fire.

"We are all here now, speak no English. It will be better so," ordered a gruff authoritative voice in Gaelic. "What is to be done with this fellow? You first, Donald."

"Who ever he be," was the slow response, "you all know well what means it if the man escape. We will have to give up our plans altogether, or ride out of the grant this very night. For when his tale goes to the ear of the Laird it will be prison for all here."

Craig with difficulty suppressed a smile. Gaelic he understood almost as well as English, a fact which no one seemed to suspect. These were no followers of Papi-neau or MacKenzie, but conspirators against the Laird of McNab.

"I would take this lad, strip him to the skin, horsewhip him well, and ride him twenty miles south. Then let him go with a warning word that death would be his portion if he ever sets foot in the grant again. It would be a fair warning to others," said a youthful voice.

"I'm damned now, if ye do any such a thing," blurted out a clear eager voice, "till you prove beyond a doubt that the man is a spy. In one thing, he speaks the truth. He is the Chief's surveyor, and he may have fallen on our meeting by chance."

Craig's heart throbbed with gladness; it was the voice of Peter McIntyre.

"But how do you know—give your reasons," demanded several.

"I cannot believe he is that kind of a man," went on Peter. "For it was him there who one day, six months

ago, thrashed Allan Dhu, when he laid his foul hands on a woman against her will."

"Thrashed Allan Dhu—is it so—when and where?" the eager questions came thick and fast.

"That," said Peter, "is my own business, but that it is true, I give you my word."

"The lad can fight—that I'll no deny," said the man who had gone down before Craig's fist. "He gave me a punch like a kick of an ox. Even if it was but by chance he stumbled on our meeting, he is one of the Chief's men and we cannot let him go back to Kennell. The man is of the gentry and he'll stand by his own folk."

"Ah! Go on! Devil a bit do you know what he'll do," broke in a new voice. The man was speaking the language of the Celt, not the guttural Gaelic of the Highlands, but the soft melodious dialect of western Ireland. An Irishman, who could he be? The blindfolded man could sense that the last speaker had risen and was now standing close in front of him.

"It is a pack of loons ye are to be after thinking this man is a spy," roared Murty, in his native tongue. "This lad fears no one, not even the Ould Tarrier himself. It is true what ye have been told. It was them hands there that gave Allan Dhu that elegant black eye he was wearing last spring. The Chief tried to make the surveyor here a witness against Peter in the matter of the nameless letter, the day that the Ould Tarrier beat him up at Kennell, arrested him and sent him to Perth. He wanted that man there to swear that the writing on the letter was Peter's, and Mr. Craig would not do it. He defied the Laird right in his own house."

"Now will you be telling me," demanded McGonigal in scornful accents, "that he is the stuff that spies are made of? Would a man like that come sneaking around here to carry news of us to the Chief. Go on,—you are crazy to think of it. It is myself that will talk to him and see where he stands."

"Mister Craig," Murty changed quickly to English; his

tone was conciliatory and respectful. "Divil a man av us thinks ye are a spy now—that's settled. But ye can see we are in a fix. Sure we can't let ye go back to Kennell—beholden as ye be to the Chafe. 'Tis the cruel necessity av war, Mr. Craig."

The surveyor said nothing; he was awaiting developments.

"For 'tis war, Mr. Craig—war to the knife between us and the Ould Tarrier. Listen, man—'tis a fight for liberty," Murty cried in impassioned tones. "'Tis the same ould fight in which your ancestors and mine have shed their blood for the last five hundred years. Ye have been six months in the grant, Mr. Craig, and if ye have not l'arned av the tyranny and highhandedness av the Ould Tarrier, the foulness av his son and devilishness av Mac-Tavish, then 'tis myself will be after tellin' ye.

"Ten years ago whin the Laird issued leases for the lands, not wan wurrud was there consarnin' the timber, but he takes all the logs from their land without the scratch av a pen to show for it. Poor Alec Miller he drove from the grant, and his wife and childher would have starved if it hadn't been for the neighbours; and because they went bail for Miller, McIntyre and McFarlane are hunted men, dodging the process-sarvers be night and day. To-day he seized John Mohr McIntyre's cows and horses, l'avin' him and his family to face the winter without meat or milk."

Craig started; it was the first he had heard of the seizure of the cattle.

"The law will protect you or others if you are being wronged," he suggested.

"The law—the law!" Murty's voice was vibrant with scorn. "The law is a friend to wan man only—him with the full purse. What can we poor folks be doin' with the law? Where can we be getting the money to pay fat fees to the lawyers, and where can we find the time to go to Perth? 'Tis a five-day trip and a hard wan at that. Sure, Mr. Craig, the law is what it was in the ould land,

a servant to the rich and a whip for the back av the poor."

"Aye—aye—'tis true, Murty," chorused the listeners.

"And now, Mr. Craig, not wan man is there in this room does not respect you for the way ye stood be Peter, and for the elegant lambastin' ye gave Allan Dhu. Ye have the soul av a true gintlemin and your heart is in the right place. Will ye join us and take the oath? Clost as ye are to the Chief, 'tis of great assistance ye can be to us."

For a space no sound was audible save the crackling of twigs in the hearth.

"You ask me," said Craig, in slow astonishment, "to take a man's money, live in his house, eat at his table and then play traitor to him. No, my friends, I cannot do it—no man of honour could."

The angry chorus of ejaculations was suddenly silenced by the steady voice of McGonigal.

"Then can ye promise us to ride from here southward, and come no more to the grant, and to spake no wurd av what ye have seen? Give us that pledge and ye can go free."

For some moments the surveyor sat silent. He had been deeply moved by the man's rude eloquence, but to suddenly surrender his position with the Chief was anything but a pleasant prospect. After some years of financial vicissitudes, he had come to the new world to make his way. To desert the Laird would be to earn the relentless enmity of a man who was not without influence in the cities of the colony. One word from the McNab would go far indeed to destroy his professional future. Much as he deplored the Chief's methods, and in spite of his growing sympathy with the settlers, Craig felt that the sacrifice was one that he could not make.

"No, nor that either—I cannot. It means too much to me," he responded firmly.

"Give o'er this senseless clashin', McGonigal; strip him, lash him well and ride him out o' the grant. I warrant he'll no come back," protested a voice in Gaelic.

"Do it," cried Craig, unconsciously in the same tongue, "and I swear to you that I *will* come back and put every one of you behind prison bars. There are voices here that I recognise. Gaelic I know as well as yourselves—I learned it at my mother's knee."

The effect of the announcement was startling, the man spoke Gaelic; he had understood every word since first he entered the cabin. The faces of many paled with fear.

"Then," concluded the rasping voice of Alec Stewart, "we hae but small choice. The man must die. I'll do it masel, if it be that none else wull."

"Right, Alec—we'll stand by ye, lad—we are wi' ye." For a moment Craig felt a thrill of fear. These men were not to be trifled with.

"Ah, shut up, Alec, ye talk like a fool," snapped Murty. "Then, Mr. Craig, will ye agree to this? If we l'ave ye go back to the Lodge, free and unharmed, will ye pledge us your word of honour that ye will tell to no man av our meeting here, no matter what ye may hear said about us?"

"'Tis madness!" roared Stewart. "Would you put all our necks in the noose, McGonigal? We hae had for years the word o' another Scottish gentleman, the Laird himsal', and it's no worth a bawbee."

"Sit ye down, Alec, and let Murty hae his way," ordered Peter McIntyre. "He kens weel what he's doin'. Noo, Mr. Craig."

"Yes, I will give you my word of honour to keep silence regarding this meeting," replied Craig.

"But if ye be called in court to testify agin' us, wull ye then hold your tongue?" demanded the irreconcilable Stewart.

"If ye must go to jail for it?" added another voice.

"Yes, even if I have to go to jail for it."

For fully five minutes the surveyor listened eagerly to the whispered conversation about him. He could hear the voices of Peter McIntyre and the Irishman pleading, protesting, urging, overriding objection after objection.

"Byes," cried McGonigal when he noted the arrival of the psychological moment, "I belave the man. Shall we take his word?"

"Aye—aye," came from all parts of the room. "Swear him on the skean."

Craig's arms, still tied at the wrists, were raised till his fingers met the hilt of a dagger.

"Mr. Craig," Peter McIntyre spoke in a solemn voice, "ye hae Highland blood—ye speak the tongue o' the Highlands, do ye swear to us that ye wull keep secret what ye hae learned this night, else may this dagger draw your heart's blood."

"So help me God, I so promise," said Craig gravely.

As he spoke the bandage about his eyes, which had been gradually unloosened, fell to his shoulders.

"My God!—he can see us noo," whispered one.

"Whist—whist, lad, we have the man's word and the oath on the knife—'tis a good enough cross," added Murty to himself.

"There be three others here for the first time the night. Let them be sworn," suggested Alec Stewart.

One by one the new recruits stepped forward. With bowed heads and hands clasped on the dagger hilt, they repeated after Peter McIntyre:

"I do solemnly swear that I wull stand by the Black Boys till all our rights be won. That I wull obey the orders o' the council and that neither imprisonment nor the fear o' death shall wring from me word o' their deeds or existence. Else may this dagger draw my heart's blood."

It was an impressive scene. In the quiet eyes and sober faces of the men as they stood listening to the words of the oath—words which cut through a stillness almost religious in its solemnity—was unemotional determination. On each and every one was the mighty spell of the past. For so had their fathers from time immemorial, when planning raid or foray against the Lowland foe, pledged to each other their sacred faith even unto death itself. Craig's

Scottish blood thrilled at the sight. He knew the breed. Theirs was not the mercurial effervescence of a southern race. Deeds, not words, would in due time speak their purpose.

"'Tis glad I am to hold the hand that pasted Allan Dhu," said Murty, as he shook Craig's hand in parting. "Now be aff with ye, we have work to do. Forgit ye were here."

"Take the lake shore—'tis the easiest road, wi' the snow a foot deep," suggested Peter.

An hour later the surveyor was thundering at the door of Kennell Lodge.

"Losh, but ye are late, Meester Craig," grumbled old man McCuan, as he unhooked the door chain. "The Laird was sore fashed about ye. He feared ye had wandered in the snowfall."

"Is that Craig?" called the deep voice of the Chief from the head of the stairway. "Bestir yersal, McCuan. Lay the table and get the lad a jug o' hot grog. 'Tis a bitter cold night."

Craig had divested himself of his heavy overcoat and stood warming himself by the cheery blaze, when a crash as of overturned furniture came from the room across the hall.

"Lord hae mercy!—what's that, noo?" gasped the chamberlain.

Rushing across the hall ahead of the startled McCuan, Craig was in time to see the dim figure of a man leaping through an opened window. An overturned chair and a feebly flickering candle lay on the floor.

"Help!—Help!—Robbers!" yelled McCuan.

The Chief, half dressed, a pistol in his hand, followed by MacTavish and McNee, came leaping down the stairs.

The floor of the room, the Laird's private office, was littered with papers; the Chief's desk lay open, its contents in disorder. At the spectacle the countenance of the McNab turned ashen. Rushing to the desk, he searched hastily for a moment.

"'Tis gone, MacTavish—'tis gone!" he gasped. "See, the secret drawer is bruk open—'tis gone!"

Suddenly he became aware of Craig's presence and with a visible effort recovered a portion of his composure.

"Some valuable papers, Mr. Craig," he explained; "auld family heirlooms."

"Out—out, McNee!" he yelled suddenly. "The scunner! can no gang far in this deep snow. A hundred guineas to the man that catches him."

As McNee sprang through the doorway, the Chief sank into a chair, an expression of deep anxiety on his face.

MacTavish was feverishly fumbling among the papers on the floor. Craig, astounded by the strange happenings of the night, stood watching him, when McNee suddenly bolted back into the room.

"I saw her—Chief, I saw her," he gurgled. "'Twas the Dark Lady."

An incredulous oath burst from the lips of the Laird:

"Ye damned auld fool. The Dark Lady doesna steal papers from a man's desk."

"'Twas her—I'm telling ye," McNee stoutly maintained. McCuan hid his face in his hands and moaned in terror.

Keyed up to a pitch of nervous excitement by the vivid scenes he had witnessed, Craig laid awake for hours. Whether he would or no, it seemed that he was fated to be drawn into the conflict between the Chief and his clansmen. Not only did his knowledge of the Black Boys weigh heavily upon him, but in his momentary glimpse of the midnight marauder he fancied he had detected a resemblance to the figure of Duncan Cameron.

Hardly, it seemed, had he closed his eyes when shrill cries echoed through the spacious corridors of Kennell Lodge.

"Fire!—Fire!"

The frost-covered window panes of his chambers were bright with a ruddy glow, and the night seemed filled with a dull roar. Below he could hear the shouts of man, the deep bass of the McNab, the shrill treble of the Chancellor.

'At the rear door of the Lodge stood the Laird and his retainers. The McNab's massive countenance as he poured forth a torrent of profanity was purple with passion. Mac-Tavish was wringing his hands hopelessly; McNee and McCuan stood staring in helpless inactivity.

Beneath a sky already whitening with coming day the snow-clad fields, the dark towering pines, the looming forms of the outhouses were all bathed in a blood-red radiance.

Two hundred yards away from where they stood the Chief's barns, filled to overflowing with grain—the year's toll from the crops of his clansmen—were now a roaring, seething mass of scarlet flame.

The Black Boys had struck their first blow.

CHAPTER XI

"LOWER THAN LIPSEY"

ABOUT here, Mr. Craig," remarked the Chief, as he drew rein and glanced about him.

Craig dismounted and drove his surveyor's staff into the hard-packed snow in the centre of the roadway. His chainbearer, Dugald Lipsey, and the two stakemen were already on foot awaiting orders.

He glanced enquiringly at the Laird. This morning, as he was about to set out on his return trip to the North Bush, the Chief had instructed him to postpone the visit till the morrow, as he had decided to open a new road near the Flat Rapids settlement. In view of the depth of the snow and the hardness of the ground, Craig had ventured a mild protest at the unusual proceeding, a protest which the Laird had brushed aside by asserting with unaccustomed curtness that the work contemplated was of pressing importance.

"From here, Mr. Craig. Ye wull run and stake a road sixty-foot wide to the river bank—in that direction," he pointed with his riding whip. "Due northeast, is it not?"

"Northeast by east," corrected Craig, looking at the compass. As he glanced upward he noticed the peculiar enigmatical smile on the Chief's countenance.

He was somewhat puzzled. Even this morning, when the matter of the new road had been first broached, the Laird's usual bluff, open manner seemed tinged with crafty secretiveness. For the first time the Chief had failed to discuss his plans fully and freely with the surveyor. Aside from that, Craig could not perceive what purpose, immediate or remote, would be served by such a thoroughfare.

“You purpose the building of a bridge at the point of intersection with the river, later on, I presume?” hazarded Craig.

“Mebbe, mebbe,” responded the Chief, as the corners of his mouth bent a little. “Carry the line straight through to the river regardless o’ obstacles. I wull be back in an hour.”

Despite the foot or more of snow on the ground, the day was warm and balmy. Under the breath of the soft breeze from the south, the rounded snow-caps on fence-rail and stump-top were slowly sinking. The snow under foot showed the effect of the two days’ January thaw; here and there in the maple woods brown patches of ground peeped through the coverlet of winter.

Engaged in running the centre-line of the road, the surveyor glanced again and again through the slits in the head of his Jacob’s staff and waved his hands to right and left, in motions designating the exact spot for the leveling rod in the hands of Lipsey. Behind him, as in chain lengths he pushed his way among the tree trunks, he could hear the thuds of his assistants’ mallets as they drove the stakes into the frozen ground.

Though superficially absorbed in the mechanical movements of his task, the subconscious mind of the surveyor was occupied as it had been for days with the incidents of his visit to the home of the McIntyres. Ever in his mind was the girl’s piquant face, her cool yet charming self-possession, the alluring witchery of her smile, the raillery in her challenging eyes, clearest, aye, sweetest of all, came to him the memory of the caress on his cheek the moment before she had vanished from his sight.

He stood erect and breathed deeply. Ah! life was good. Golden bright the sunshine streamed through the leafless branches. Beautiful the world in its snowy mantle. Azure, clear and unspotted the sky above him. It was a perfect Canadian winter day, a day when dire indeed must be the plight of the man who could yield to melancholy. Least of

all Barclay Craig, into whose life had come a joyful hope that ever kept a smile on his lips and a song at his heart.

One by one his gloomy forebodings and doubts of the future fell from him, as withered leaves from autumn boughs. In tune with the glory of the day, optimism mounted high within his heart. The quarrel of the Chief and his clansmen would surely pass. When the Laird's anger over the burning of his barn had faded, and the hot-headed youngsters who were guilty of the deed had taken counsel of their cooler moments, both would surely see that a continuation of the struggle was utter folly. This was the age of law, and sooner or later the entire matter of the Chief's prerogatives and the rights of the settlers would be passed on by the courts, and all concerned would bow willingly to the decision of the law. It was absurd, after all, to imagine that in this day and age such a difference so clearly within the purview of the judiciary could lead to anything serious.

Perhaps, he mused, he could assist in a tactful, unobtrusive way in bringing about a reconciliation. Already he had taken a step in that direction. Yesterday, as he had halted a few moments at McGonigal's smithy, he had endeavoured to impress on the Irishman the futility of the activities of the Black Boys. To all of which the smith had listened respectfully.

"Ye mean well, Mister Craig," McGonigal had said, "but 'tis meself that thinks ye're more than a mile from understanding the nature av the Ould Tarrier." The smith's words and manner had been non-committal, but Craig believed that he had made some impression.

Possessing as he did the confidence of the Chief and in good standing at the home of the McIntyres, he was in an ideal position to act as an intermediary. Before long he would sound the Laird on the question, and this very evening, he concluded, he would accept Flora's invitation and possibly find an opportunity of feeling his way with John Mohr himself.

And Flora McIntyre—he had never seen any one like

her. The profound impression she had made on him had deepened and strengthened as the days passed. Only another three weeks' trip to the North Bush had prevented his seeing her again.

For he knew now that this splendid, spirited girl, with her hair like night and her quizzical, boyish blue eyes, was necessary to his happiness. There was no doubt now in his mind or heart. He wanted her for his own—wanted her more than he had ever wanted anything in all his life.

Yes, he would accept the Chief's offer of the hundred-acre lot on the Dochart. The McNab had hinted more than once that he might secure for Craig an appointment as Crown Lands surveyor, a well-paid sinecure that would require his presence part of the time in Montreal.

Fortunate indeed, he mused, was the fate that had directed his footsteps towards the grant. Here within reach of his hand lay a promising future, and here he had found the one woman in all the world. He would win her if he could, and——

"Must I gang o'er the fence?" asked the obsequious voice of Lipsey, his chain-bearer.

Awakened from his reverie, Craig stared in surprise at the sight confronting him. Directly across the line they were running stretched a zig-zag rail fence; beyond, some low shrubbery, above which the roofs of farm buildings showed.

Craig hesitated. There must be some mistake. Could he have made an error in his calculations. He turned and sighted back along the line of stakes protruding from the snow, then glanced at his compass. No, the line was true, the direction correct. He looked again towards the buildings. The centre line of the new road would run evidently between the residence and the barn. It was certainly rather peculiar. Still, the Chief's direction had been "straight ahead to the river."

"Yes, Lipsey," he called, "over the fence."

Two more chain lengths brought them through the shrub-

bery and into the open clearing; the next two to a point directly back of the log-built home.

He stood staring about him thoughtfully. Surely the Chief must have made a mistake in his direction. It was certainly a strange proceeding this, driving a road across a settler's hundred-acre lot, in a diagonal direction, cutting the property into two awkward triangles.

So absorbed was he in his speculations that he failed to notice the stealthy approach of a stately, grey-haired man, who had been cautiously picking his way among the tree-trunks, stopping now and then to reconnoitre. Catching sight of Craig, the newcomer smothered an exclamation of surprise and dodged hastily into the end door of the barn.

Still Craig hesitated, lost in thought. Would it not be better perhaps to go back and lay the matter before the Chief and ask for further instructions. But it was quite possible that the whole affair had already been arranged with the occupants of the farm. He knew that the settlers had been clamouring for the erection of a bridge across the Madawaska. Yet the site selected for that structure was a most disadvantageous one, the last he himself would have chosen. Well, he would complete the survey and later call the Chief's attention to it.

With a resounding clang, the big barn door flew open and the tall man stepped out. He held a hay fork in his hand. Lipsey was plunging through the snow towards the fence, as if a thousand furies were at his heels.

"What be ye doin' here, young man?" demanded the newcomer.

Craig's steady gaze took in the stranger's calm broad brow behind which, he surmised, lay a cool quiet brain. Something in the man's countenance commanded respect.

"Surveying a road, sir," he responded courteously. "It is the approach to the new bridge, I fancy."

"So I see. Weel, ye wull run no road across my land. Quit the place afore I do ye hurt."

"Sir," said Craig, "I can have no quarrel with you or

you with me. I am here under the orders of the McNab. You must settle the question with my employer. I supposed you were aware of the matter.”

“Off—off, I tell ye, or loath as I be to harm ye, ye wull soon feel these prongs in your flesh, if ye dinna gang,” was the determined response. Already the lance-like points were close to the surveyor’s breast.

Astounded at the man’s evident determination, Craig had somewhat hesitatingly raised his surveyor’s staff to ward off the steel-tipped weapon, when to his ears came a voice that sent a thrill through his every nerve—the voice of Flora McIntyre:

“Good heavens—what does this mean? You, father, and you, Mr. Craig—quarrelling. Have you both taken leave of your senses?”

“Another device o’ the Laird’s, daughter. He has sent this young man to lay a road across my land—to spoil our farm by cutting it in two. I’ll no stand it, if I have to die on the spot.”

Like a thunderbolt from a sky of cloudless blue came to Barclay Craig a realisation of his position. In a swift flash of illumination he understood it all. This was the home of the McIntyres, the man whose stern relentless eyes were gazing into his was McIntyre himself. There was no reason that he should have recognised the spot. On the occasion of his visit to the house, his concern over the plight of the boy, his haste, the growing darkness and the fact that he had approached the house from the front were ample reason for his failure to locate his whereabouts.

The landscape quickly readjusted itself. He recognised now the road in front of the house and, further beyond, the path up which he had stumbled with the boy in his arms. His heart sickened within him. In his utter stupefaction he stammered:

“I did not know—I did—not—know—I——”

The proximity of the steel prongs to his person caused him to retreat a few steps. McIntyre was ready to make

good his threat. Still hesitating, he turned to Flora who stood regarding him with cold contempt:

"Miss McIntyre, you will understand——"

"I understand quite well—everything—except one thing. How a man such as you seemed to be can so lower yourself to become the tool of an unscrupulous tyrant. No—no, you cannot plead innocence, you know—you knew," there was a little sob in her throat, "of the injustice that had been heaped on my father, and knowing, you still chose to be the agent of the Chief in furthering his persecution of an innocent man,—‘to crook the pregnant hinges of the knee, that thrift might follow fawning.’ Do not tell me that a man of your training can find no better life occupation than doing the contemptible work of a contemptible master.

"You are lower than Lipsey," she went on, in measured tones, but her eyes were flaming, her face flushed with anger, her lips curling in scorn.

"Lipsey is a poor illiterate Highlander. He knows nothing save to kiss the hand that feeds him and obey like a kicked cur. There may be some excuse for him, but for you—you, a gentleman—there is no excuse. Yes, you are lower than Lipsey—infinately lower than Lipsey."

"Lower than Lipsey"—she had likened him to Lipsey, his chain-bearer, the crawling obsequious creature of the Chief, a man who addressed no one save with cringing neck and hat in hand, whose humble fawning was the joke of the grant. The words cut through his consciousness like a red-hot knife.

"Go—go back to your master," she flashed, "and do not ever dare to speak to me—to look at me. You belong to the Chief—your knowledge, your skill, your learning are his. And I—I stand by my father and my people against all the world."

McIntyre had withdrawn his dangerous weapon and stood staring at his daughter in amazement. He seemed about to question her when Craig lifted his cap, turned on his heel and strode away towards the fence.

As he reached the barrier the Chief came hurrying up.

"How, noo, Craig?" he queried.

White to the lips, the surveyor made no answer, but silently climbed the fence.

At the sight of McIntyre, who, pitchfork in hand, was recklessly advancing towards the group, the Laird, to the surprise of all, climbed the rails and hastened to meet him.

"So, McIntyre," he thundered, "ye hae obstructed the survey. Noo I, as magistrate and path master, bid ye desist from all resistance to the law."

"Get off my land or I'll send you to eternity," was McIntyre's defiant response as he raised his weapon.

The Chief beat a hurried retreat. No sooner had he recrossed the fence than he turned to the others with a satisfied smile:

"I call ye all to witness that I hae been deforced in the doin' o' my duty as a Queen's representative. All home, men. 'Tis more than enough. I ask no man to risk life or limb in my sarvice. Craig, ride wi' me, I hae a word for ye."

In silence they rode together out of the woods. As soon as they were out of hearing of the others, the McNab turned to the surveyor with a hoarse chuckle:

"Egad! the man MacTavish is unco' clever. The auld de'il, 'twas his idea."

"Noo," he went on, "I hae that scunner! McIntyre where I want him. 'Tis no a civil matter this, like the sarvin' o' the papers for the bonds. 'Tis a criminal matter. He has interfered wi' an officer o' the Crown in the discharge o' his duty. If he evades arrest noo, he can be outlawed and shot down like a dog. Ye hae been a handy man to me the day, Mr. Craig."

To Craig, whose benumbed mind was hardly capable of thought, the intimation that the road survey had been nothing but a damnable scheme born in the merciless mind of MacTavish, a deep-laid plot that threatened the liberty and possibly the life of John Mohr McIntyre, came like a blow in the face.

For an instant his soul seethed with fury and sudden hatred for the man at his side. He pressed his horse closer to the Laird's, his fingers twisting, writhing with a wild longing to entwine themselves about the throat of the McNab and choke the self-satisfied smirk from his lips. So could he vindicate himself in the eyes of Flora McIntyre; aye, even in his own eyes.

But the man's marvellous self-control came to his rescue. With a mighty effort he mastered his passion and rode on in silence. But his determination was fixed. No man could make of him an agent of tyranny—an instrument of injustice. No affair of his? Well, by the Eternal, he would make it his affair!

And ever through his aching heart echoed the biting, stinging words of Flora McIntyre:

"You are lower than Lipsey—infinately lower than Lipsey."

CHAPTER XII

THE BREAK

AS Barclay Craig entered the Chief's private office, the latter looked up with a welcoming smile. For two hours the surveyor had been occupied packing his belongings preparatory to leaving Kennell Lodge forever.

"Set ye down, Craig," said the Chief. "I hae much to say to ye."

The usual cordial expression of the surveyor's face had changed to a granite hardness. He had determined that this was the last night he would spend under the roof of the McNab.

"I hae here a paper on which I want your signature," remarked the Chief, as he handed him a document. "Sign here under mine own name. I hae given ye the place o' honour," he added jocularly.

Craig glanced over the closely written sheet. It was a formal legal complaint, addressed to the Court of Quarter Sessions at Perth, accusing John Mohr McIntyre, in the quaint phraseology of the time, of "having deforced a magistrate, the McNab of McNab, in the work of directing a Crown survey."

Something of the young man's smothered indignation showed in the sharpness of his tone as he returned the document to the Laird with the response:

"I will not put my name to that paper."

"Man, ye dinna mean it!" exclaimed the Chief in astonishment. "Ye saw the whole occurrence. We need your testimony. What the De'il *do* ye mean?"

"It means," said Craig, in succinct tones, "that I here and now tender you my resignation, and request that what-

ever is owing me be paid at once. I wish to leave early in the morning."

"For what—for what be ye quitting me?" exclaimed the Chief, in wide-eyed surprise. "Wi' the work no more than half done. Ye hae had a better offer?"

"No, I have had no other offer."

"Then, for what? I dinna understand. Hae I no treated ye weel?"

"With the remuneration, I have no fault to find, nor with your hospitable treatment of myself. Both have been generous, even princely, and for both I thank you."

"Then, explain, man—dinna beat about the bush," demanded the Laird.

"Chief McNab," said Craig, rising to his feet, "I am determined to leave your service because I will not allow myself to be drawn into the conflict between yourself and your tenants. I cannot allow myself to be made an instrument of injustice, as you have used me to-day."

For an instant the eyes of the Laird met his in sudden comprehension. The Chief, though his face had reddened, restrained himself with an effort. During their six months acquaintanceship he had formed a high regard for the man before him, and he had no desire to lose his services and, what he valued almost as much, his companionship.

"So," he said, with a sigh, "ye sympathise wi' my 'black sheep'—wi' McIntyre?"

"I do. And had I known the real purpose of the new road, I would have refused to run the line this morning."

Craig had expected that the announcement of his sentiments would be met by a sudden outburst of furious anger, but, to his surprise, the Laird made no response, but sat for fully a minute looking at him thoughtfully. Then he reached to the top of the desk, took down a long-stemmed pipe, very deliberately filled it from the jar and lit it.

"Noo, Craig, my friend," he said impressively, "ye must listen to masel'. Ye be a young man, and young blood is aye warm and a young head hasty. Ye think it hard—my

manner o' dealin' wi' McIntyre and the others? And so it may seem—so it may seem."

"But think ye, man," he went on, "but for me none o' them but would be common farm-labourers—crofters in the Highlands wi' pease brose three times a day, and meat once a week. And naught in the future facing them and their bairns but endless poverty.

"Ten years ago," his air was proudly reminiscent, "I was nigh reduced to beggary, save a small patrimony from my mother's estate. The last penny o' that same I expended in bringing the first o' my people from Perthshire. Aye, I even incurred debt. Later I brought here Buchanan and his mills that they might no hae the breaking o' their backs in saw-pits, and carrying their grists on horse-back to Pakenham.

"Ten years ago there was no a house in the grant, no a tree had been fallen atween the mouth o' the Mada-waska and Lochwinnoch. And noo—weel, ye hae seen—there be fifty families living in comfort—comfort they would hae never kenned in the auld land.

"And 'tis but a beginning—look ye, Craig." He stepped to a map hanging on the wall and with his pipe stem pointed to the valley of the Ottawa. His eyes were bright, his voice vibrating with enthusiasm.

"'Westward the course o' Empire takes its way,'" he quoted. "Here lies its fated road. Past the threshold o' my grant, up the Ottawa valley, is the way to the west. We sit at its gateway. From Montreal the iron horse shall push its screaming path across the lands o' the McNab, carrying thousands, aye, millions, to their new homes and bearing back the fish o' the Great Lakes, the lumber o' the far North, the metals from the mines. And, mark weel my words, men noo alive shall live to see uninterrupted navigation from salt water to the head o' Lake Huron, to see the digging o' a canal that wull bring fleets o' steamers, wi' the flags o' all nations, wi' their ocean borne cargoes here on our lake.

"And what then, Craig," he demanded, in ringing tones,

"will come to the grant? Instead o' fifty families, five hundred, aye, five thousand, families shall live in plenty and prosperity. And for these, my clansmen, who were the first to come, wull be riches and luxury beyond the dreams o' avarice. The hamlet o' Arnprior shall rise a town—aye, a city—who can tell?"

"Craig, Craig, my friend, can ye no see all this?" he cried in impassioned tones, his eyes flashing with the light of an inspired prophet.

"'Tis to this future I look forward," he continued, more quietly. "'Tis toward this I hae made my plans, for the future welfare o' my clansmen. They and their bairns shall hae wealth the cities o' the day dinna ken. For, as God hears me, they be my people, my kinsmen, bone o' my bone, flesh o' my flesh."

His eyes were moist, his voice quivered with emotion. As if ashamed, he turned away and strode several times across the room.

Barclay Craig sat in silence, his almost hypnotised eyes on the giant figure of the Chief, his mind dazzled by the glowing future so eloquently pictured. He had never been insensible to the captivating charm, the magnetism of the McNab's powerful personality, and now reinforced by the touch of a softer emotion, apparently actuated by a high and noble motive, fired by the visionary yet not impossible dreams of an idealist—to the surveyor the Laird seemed more than ever convincing.

"Noo, for this—for all this," continued the Chief, in a steady tone, "I must hae loyalty and obedience and implicit faith in masel'. The clans and the chieftains o' auld are passing away. But here, in this new land, wi' the help o' God, one clan shall live forever, under their hereditary chief. My power as magistrate comes from the law, but my rights as Chief o' the clan McNab come from God Himsal'. We wull prove that the clan system can live and thrive under the new condition o' a new world, that it be o' divine origin. Let them but hae confidence in masel' and patience, and all wull be weel.

"So I canna and I willna stand a Miller, a McIntyre or a McFarlane to prevail agin' me, to weaken my hold on my people, to bring to naught my plans for their future happiness. 'Twud be treason to the clan, treason to the future—I must crush them, Craig.

"And by the God that made me," he concluded solemnly, "I wull do my duty, as He has given it to me, to see it."

Carried away for a moment by the man's evident earnestness and sincerity, the surveyor stared at him, unable to utter a word. It was almost with an effort that he recalled the home of the McIntyres, the mild-mannered sorrowing mother—the father, a hunted fugitive, with the threat of outlawry now hanging over him—the splendid girl, whose indomitable spirit could be neither intimidated nor subdued.

In quick comprehension, Craig's trained, logical mind grasped the salient fact. The Laird was sincere, he was speaking the truth as he saw it. Not a word but came from his heart. In his own way he loved his people; he hungered for their welfare, but the inherited pride of a hundred chieftain ancestors forbade that that welfare should be realised save in the manner he might select and approve.

The Laird, he saw, had the faculty—or the weakness—not an uncommon one,— of deceiving himself as to his own motives. His resentment against McIntyre and McFarlane and his consequent persecution of them, was the result of the blow which their conduct had administered to his pride, yet by the peculiar psychological alchemy of the man's mind it had been honestly attributed to higher and nobler motives—the protection of his chiefly prerogatives and future welfare of the people of the grant. The surveyor sat lost in a silent study of the Chief's peculiar mental processes.

"Man," said the Laird, as he noted the apparent impression he had made, "do ye think I make no sacrifice masel' ? I, the Chief o' the McNabs, to whom every court o' the auld lands is open. Do ye think I no yearn for the delights o' civilisation, the music o' France, the art o' Italy,

the letters o' the world, the company o' great minds, o' cultured gentlemen, the grace and beauty o' gentle women? Do you think I, who hae had all this, dinna hunger for it? I do, Craig, on my honour, every day—every hour. And any time these last five years I could hae had it if I would. I hae noo money enough to keep me to the end o' my days in comfort, amid the orange groves o' Italy or the vine-clad hills o' France, but," his voice thrilled with the resigned devotion of an anchorite, "I hae given it all up. My place is here wi' my people, till the end o' my days—here in this frozen, God-forsaken wilderness, for their sakes. And all I ax in return is their trust, their loyalty, their obedience, and I'll hae it."

The surveyor was listening with sympathy and respect, but unconvinced. He felt that as never before he understood the Laird, that for the first time he had grasped the keynote of a character which until now had been a puzzle to him.

"No, no," continued the Laird, "ye must no think o' gangin'. I hae other plans for ye. Would that God had given me such a son as ye. I hae no one on whom I can depend. Allan's a roisterer, Cameron's gone to the dogs wi' drink, and MacTavish—the man is faithful enough, but a plodding work-horse, wi' no vision—no initiative, and he is gettin' auld. I hae seen ye in my mind's eye, Craig, guidin' its destinies when I be auld and doddering. Say ye'll stay, man," he pleaded, "and when the surveying work is finished, I want ye for my manager."

Craig was almost stunned by the announcement. To be manager of the grant—to replace MacTavish, to be afforded an opportunity of guiding the Chief into kinder and wiser channels.

"Wait a moment, Chief; let me think."

He sat in silence pondering the problem. What a vista of possibilities, not only for the Chief, but for the settlers, for himself—for the McIntyres—for Flora McIntyre. Possessing the confidence of the Black Boys, in good standing with the Laird himself, surely, surely he could do much

to bring about a reconciliation. To bring peace to the grant, happiness to troubled homes, to aid in the realisation of the magnificent industrial dreams of the Laird, to lay the foundation of fortune for himself—it was a glorious mission, the very thought of which made his blood run faster. Yet—yet he knew full well it was one that would require the widest wisdom, infinite patience, and endless tact.

But would the Chief ever consent to modify his attitude toward the recalcitrant clansmen? Could he be induced to give Craig somewhat of a free hand in the matter on which he felt so strongly? It would be well to sound him on the subject.

Completely absorbed in his speculations, he failed to notice the almost noiseless opening of the door and the stealthy entrance of MacTavish.

“Chief,” Craig began, “in the matter of——”

“Had ye no better ax the man if the McIntyres gave him a good dinner that day he was visitin’ wi’ them a month ago?” came the rasping voice of MacTavish.

Neither the McNab nor Craig dreamed that the Chancellor had been listening at the door for the last half-hour. Long ago the wily old man had detected the Laird’s growing fondness for the surveyor and had read in it the possibility of his own downfall. For over two months Craig’s every movement had been dogged whenever possible by himself or one of his spies.

At the Chancellor’s startling query the burly form of the Chief’s straightened and his eye flashed ominously.

“Hae ye broke bread wi’ the McIntyres, Craig?” he demanded.

The peremptory tone of the Chief stung the pride of Barclay Craig to the quick. A moment ago something of liking and much of respect had been creeping into his mind, but now he was up in arms. He could, indeed, have pleaded the accidental nature of the visit, but that would have been to acknowledge the McNab’s right to dictation in the matter. No employer of his could ever question his comings and goings.

"I have," he responded, looking the Chief straight in the eye.

MacTavish chuckled.

"Ye—Craig!" exclaimed the Chief, aghast. "Ye who hae been o' my family—my household—ye hae accepted the hospitality o' the McIntyres." He spoke like a wronged and injured man.

"Ax him how long he stood on the river bank in the gloaming, muzzling the fingers o' McIntyre's lass," taunted MacTavish with an enjoyable grin. "I'm no wonderin'," he jeered, "that Allan Dhu fared but ill wi' his wooin'."

The Chief's mouth opened in dumb astonishment, and his commanding eyes beneath their frowning brows glared angrily at the surveyor.

This man to whom he had thrown open his home in boundless hospitality, and for whom he had begun to feel almost the affection of a father, this man to whom he had just opened his heart, and whom he had contemplated placing in charge of his vast interests, had been consorting with his enemies. And it was this man who, as a rival of Allan Dhu, had been responsible for the bitter humiliation heaped upon himself by McIntyre's refusal of Allan Dhu as a son-in-law. At the thought of his son, who according to the latest reports was drowning his sorrows in a series of wild orgies in Montreal, the Laird's rage overmastered him.

"Craig—ye—ye—damned scunner!,—ye—ye——" he gasped, unable to put his passion in coherent words.

The surveyor rose to his feet, his face hot, not with shame but indignation. He realised now the utter futility of his dream of ever acting as mediator between the Chief and the clansmen. Greater and keener than the sting of the Laird's insulting words was his anger at the introduction of the name of Flora McIntyre into the discussion. He strode over to the Chancellor, grasped him by the collar, and, almost lifting him off his feet, turned his puny form till his angry eyes were staring into those of MacTavish.

"MacTavish—have a care. Speak of that young lady with respect or your years will not save you from a sound slapping." As he dropped the old man into his chair, he turned to the Chief and his voice rang out defiantly:

"That you, sir, should dare to assume the right to name my friends for me is but another reason why I must leave your service. Let me have what is due me and I will go."

But MacTavish had still another arrow in his quiver. As he sat hunched up in his chair where Craig had dropped him, he was dishevelled but undaunted.

"Ax him, Chief," he suggested, "if he didna attend a meeting o' the Black Boys."

"Ye be an auld fool, MacTavish," the McNab snorted incredulously.

"Ax him—ax him," insisted the Chancellor.

"What do ye ken o' those damnable scunnerls, Craig?" demanded the Chief. "I canna believe that ye hae had anything to do wi' that rabble."

In spite of his effort to retain his composure, the surveyor's hesitation was painfully apparent. He would have liked to defend himself against this charge, for here was a matter in which he felt the Chief was entirely within his rights in questioning him. But he was bound by his promise—a promise given under duress, but still a promise. The men had trusted him. He could not fail them.

"I refuse to answer," he said quietly.

"Then I'll answer for ye, masel'," chuckled MacTavish. "The night the scunnerls burnt our barns, they met at Morrison's auld cabin by Blaisdell's Bay. I happened on the place the next day. The signs o' recent occupancy were evident, and on the floor I found this." He produced a glove which both Craig and the Chief recognised at once as belonging to the surveyor.

"And I had other information o' that night's doings," he went on. "The man has been wi' them all along, Chief. Only yesterday he was crackin' o'er their affairs in the smithy wi' Murty McGonigal. I heerd him masel'."

Astounded by the Chancellor's unexpected accusation, embarrassed by his own enforced silence, the surveyor's countenance could not fail to show his deep perturbation of spirit. The Chief's keen eyes read in his agitation an unspoken admission of his guilt.

"So ye'll no speak, Craig?" he sneered.

"I will," snapped Barclay. "I still maintain that I have never by thought or deed done aught against you. You have my word. Take it or leave it. You may believe what you will."

In the silence that followed the monotonous ticking of the clock could be heard distinctly. Craig stood in the centre of the room, his arms folded, his head proudly erect. MacTavish, crouching in the great arm chair, was rubbing his hands and grinning joyously. The Chief's countenance as he rose to his feet was white, his heavy mouth grim with suppressed passion. At last he found his tongue:

"Craig, ye whelp—ye ungrateful dog, ye who I hae treated like a friend and a brother—ye poverty-stricken dog, ye serpent who would sting the hand that fed ye—ye——" In his rage he let slip a foul epithet.

A sound like the crack of a whip—the open hand of the surveyor had fallen full and fair on the cheek of the Laird, sending him staggering.

"A blow," he gasped, in utter bewilderment. "Ye hae struck the McNab, by his own hearthstone."

He rushed to the wall, snatched down two rapiers and extending the hilts to Craig:

"We must fight!" he roared. "Take one—there is no other way."

Barclay Craig, his rage now no less than that of the Chief, threw off his coat, and obeyed. He was no stranger to the rapier. His uncle, a veteran of Waterloo, had taught him the mastery of the weapon.

"I be gangin to kill ye, Craig," warned the Chief, as their blades crossed.

The heated rage of both had passed. It had changed

to the cool, cruel determination of which only the man in whose veins flows Scottish blood is capable.

"Boast if you will, Chief," Craig taunted back, as for a moment he gave ground before the Laird's fierce attack. "To-morrow your scoundrel son will be Laird of McNab."

Up and down the room they fought, their blades whirling streaks of silver light, no sound but the quick shuffle of their feet and the clink of the ringing steel. Madly the Chief forced the fighting, but his every assault was met by a ready and adequate defence. Slowly his face was clouding with doubt and uneasy surprise. It was evident that he had at least met his match, and that neither as quickly nor as easily as he had imagined could he make good his boast. He started and muttered an oath as a moment later he felt the sting of Craig's weapon in his shoulder.

MacTavish stood wringing his hands in terror. This was an unforeseen culmination of his long-planned attack on the surveyor. Yet even now, while in his very presence two enraged men were battling to the death, his shrewd selfish mind was busy calculating the probable result on his own fortunes. If the Chief fell (and, as far as he could see, he was hardly holding his own) MacTavish knew that on the morrow Allan Dhu would send him packing, bag and baggage, from the door of Kennell Lodge. On the other hand, if Craig were killed or even wounded, it would bring about an investigation that would call the attention of the world to conditions in the domains of the Chief. In any case, he had much to lose by a continuation of the conflict.

"Cease ye—for God's sake, cease this madness!" he screamed.

He danced for a moment about the combatants, then at a favourable opportunity thrust himself between them and grasped the Chief's sword arm with both of his. The latter, with an oath, essayed to push him off, but throwing his arms about the Laird he pressed him backward. Craig,

his face flushed, a grim smile on his lips, lowered his point and stood waiting.

"Dinna be a fool, Chief," pleaded the Chancellor. "Let the lad gang his way. He has friends and they would come to the grant axin' after him. Let him gang his way."

He bent closer and whispered in the Chief's ear: "My God, man, do ye want government officers from the city here? They would find *oot everything*."

Despite his rage, something in the content of the Chancellor's words carried conviction. Scornfully the Chief cast his weapon into a corner.

"I'll no kill ye, Craig—I hae changed my mind," he panted. "Though, by God, ye be the first man that ever struck a McNab beneath his own roof and lived to tell the tale. Give the lad his money, MacTavish, and let him gang."

For a few moments MacTavish scratched with his pen and then handed Craig a statement and a bag of coin. The surveyor crumpled the paper in his fingers, threw it on the floor and without a word pocketed the sack, put on his overcoat, drew his fur cap over his ears, and stepped out into the night on his way to the cabin of Murty McGonigal, where he had decided to spend the night.

For some moments the two sat in silence, the Chief with flushed face and heaving chest, his fingers nervously tapping the surface of the table. MacTavish was wringing his hands with a washing motion, and his countenance, as he moistened his lips with his tongue, bore evidence of his deep satisfaction.

"Hae ye found that damned paper yet?" asked the Laird, when his agitation had subsided.

"I hae no; it is no in the Lodge. I hae hunted the house from garret to cellar. The rascal that broke in the night the barns were burnit must hae took it."

A sharp knock at the door and MacTavish arose to admit a stranger.

"From Magistrate McVicar of Fitzroy," the newcomer

said, as he handed the Chief a letter. The McNab broke the seals and glanced hastily over the enclosure.

"My God, MacTavish!" he cried. "The De'il is to pay. The damned rebels are in arms. It has come at last. They hae crossed the river at Prescott. And the government troops hae been defeated at St. Denis. The call is here for the militia."

"Get your pen, Chancellor!" he cried excitedly. "I be an auld man, but no too auld to serve my Queen and country. Write, MacTavish, this letter to the Governor."

As he strode up and down the room he dictated the letter to Sir Francis Bond Head:

My Dear Sir Francis:

The spirit of my fathers has been infused into my soul by recent events, and has roused within me the recollection and memory of the prestige of my race. The only Highland Chieftain in America offers himself and his clan, the McNab Highlanders, to march forward in defence of the country.

"Their swords are a thousand,
Their hearts are but one."

We are ready to march at any moment. Command my services at once, and we will not leave the field till we have routed the hell-born rebels or

"In death be laid low
With our backs to the field
And our face to the foe."

I am, yours sincerely,

McNAB.

"Dinna send it by the post," he ordered. "Give Angus the best horse in the stable and hae him ride post-haste to the Governor at Montreal. Send word this verra night to John McNab, captain o' the militia company, to gather his men at Sand Point on the sixth. Gad! but we'll show the world that the McNabs have no forgot how to fight.

"McNee—McNee!" he roared. "Bring the pipes and play the 'Gathering' as ye hae never played it afore."

CHAPTER XIII

THE WAR-CRY OF THE CLAN

FROM the sea-splashed cliffs of Gaspé to the silent stretches of Georgian Bay, from the wilderness of the Upper Nipissing to the Thousand Isles of the St. Lawrence, the pioneer land rocked and seethed with the tumult of civil strife.

For years the legislatures of both provinces had been at logger-heads with the royal governors. Angered at the neglect of the Queen's representatives to enforce the legislation they had enacted, the law-making bodies had stubbornly refused to vote supplies. The action of Lord Gosford, governor of Lower Canada, precipitated the conflict. When the news of the adjournment of the legislature reached him, he flew into a fit of rage and gave orders for the arrest of the Speaker of the House, Louis Papineau. But when the Governor's two companies of militia reached St. Denis, the home of the reform leader, a band of sturdy "habitants," Papineau's townsmen and compatriots, armed with scythes and flintlocks, scattered them in inglorious flight.

At the tidings the reform leaders of Upper Canada hesitated no longer. William Lyon McKenzie, thrice elected and thrice expelled from the legislature of that province at the command of Sir Francis Bond Head, declared for open resistance and made preparations for an attack on the arsenal at York.

To those, like the settlers of McNab, living at a distance from the centres of population the facts were wildly distorted and fearfully exaggerated. The insurgents were supposed to have captured York, and the citadel of Que-

bec was believed to be besieged by Papineau and his following.

Widespread and deep as was the discontent of the people, the response to the appeal of the patriot leaders was neither enthusiastic nor unanimous. For behind the revolt in the minds of the men of the time loomed the gigantic figure of the great Republic to the south. The erroneous, yet general, belief that the insurrection was secretly supported by American money and influence caused many, who in their hearts sympathised with the reformers, to rally to the support of the authorities. Scarcely a generation had passed since they and their fathers had driven back the "Yankee" invaders from their soil and the memories of the conflict were still sharp and bitter in their hearts.

So was it with the clansmen of McNab. Though the gulf between themselves and their Chief had widened year by year, they had no sympathy with a revolt which threatened their connection with the mother country, and no intention of aligning themselves with a movement which their shrewd Scottish common sense told them could but result in failure. Not only the Highlanders of McNab heard and heeded the call to arms, but every log-built hut in the wilderness of the Upper Ottawa sent forth its stalwart sons in support of the government.

The straggling street of the little village of Sand Point, near the northern limit of the Laird's domain, was filled with groups of roughly clad men. Not only the clansmen of the grant, but several hundred other settlers from the neighbouring townships of Lanark and Fitzroy had rendezvoused there in preparation for their march to the frontier. The latest tidings told of the repulse of the government troops at Prescott, where the insurgents had taken possession of an old stone windmill.

Shrill and keen on the frosty morning air came the skirl of the pipes. A flaunt of colour at the end of the snow-clad street and Piper McNee, followed by the Chief, Allan Dhu and MacTavish, rode up to the veranda of the MacDonnell inn. The Chief had been expected. He was

known to be attached to the staff of Colonel Shanahan of Fitzroy, of whose regiment the clansmen formed a part.

Barclay Craig, who with Narcisse Charbonneau and Murty McGonigal had arrived in the village in the early hours of the morning, stood leaning against a veranda post. He noted with an amused smile that the welcoming shouts which greeted the arrival of the McNab came not from the clansmen, but from the Lanark and Fitzroy militiamen. Then he glanced up to meet the unfriendly gaze of the Laird himself.

"Ha! Craig," he snorted. "And what do ye here?"

"It is my intention," Craig responded coolly, "to offer my services to Colonel Shanahan, whom I have the honour of knowing quite well."

Again the McNab sniffed contemptuously.

"Ye'll no offer your valuable services to Colonel Shanahan," he announced loftily. "The Colonel is confined to his bed wi' an attack o' the gout. And the Governor has appointed masel to command the regiment."

"By Garrah—by Garrah!" muttered McGonigal at Craig's elbow. "'Tis meself that knows what the byes will be afther sayin' to that piece of news."

Tumultuously, defiantly the drums began to beat the long roll. The crowd drifted across the street to the large stone-built warehouse of John Young, where the formal enlistment was to take place.

The McNab's eye brightened as his glance wandered over the hundreds of sturdy men seated on the earthen floor of the building, perched on bales of goods, or leaning against the stone-built walls. But his face clouded as he noticed that his clansmen had drawn apart from the others and, with Murty McGonigal in the centre, were holding an excited conference in one of the far corners.

Craig stood alone near the doorway, idly watching the Chief, who, bending over an improvised table, was explaining some documents to Allan and McTavish, when a light touch on his shoulder caused him to turn his head, to meet the smiling eyes of Narcisse Charbonneau.

"Dey want you, Monsieur Craig—over dere," he whispered.

"Mr. Craig," began Peter McIntyre, as the clansmen crowded around them, "will ye sarve as our captain—that is, if we decide to enlist—we're no sure yet. Our captain, John McNab, lies ill at home."

Craig's lips parted in surprise. He did not know that the persuasive tongue of Murty McGonigal had been busy pouring into the ears of the clansmen the story of Craig's break with the Laird, learned from Craig himself. That the surveyor had lost his position with the Chief through his loyalty to his pledge was their shrewdly accurate conclusion.

Like a flash, his mind flew back to the scene in the cabin by the Blaisdells Bay, two months ago. About him were the same voices, the same faces. The same men, who on that occasion had threatened his life, were now asking him to be their leader, were now awaiting his decision. Scotchman as he was, he understood. In their undemonstrative, indirect way they were tendering him a proud apology for having so misjudged him.

For a moment he stood silent. His flushed cheek told how deeply he was moved by this evidence of their confidence in himself.

"Ye be our man, Mr. Craig," persisted Stewart. "If we sarve under the Chief, we must hae a Captain who wull see we get fair play. Ye'll give your consent?"

"That I will, with pleasure——"

"Silence!" called the Chief. All eyes were turned towards the table.

The droning voice of MacTavish rumbled on through the words of a formal document appointing the Chief colonel of the regiment. Then followed another in which the Chief, as colonel, appointed Allan Dhu captain of the company to be raised among the settlers of McNab.

Astounded beyond measure, the Highlanders gazed at one another in dismay. Low-muttered curses greeted both

announcements, but still a greater surprise was in store for them.

"Noo, my men," began the Chief, "ye are all under martial law. If ye behave weel, obey my orders, and those o' the officers set o'er ye, ye wull be treated as good soldiers, but if ye come under the lash, by the God that made me I wull use it wi'out mercy. So ye all ken your fate. Noo, I wull call on as many as wull volunteer to step to the front. Ye lads from Fitzroy first."

Eagerly the men from Fitzroy, brawny fellows from the north of Ireland, with here and there a sprinkling of English and French, pressed forward and lined up in front of the table.

Among the clansmen astonishment and dismay had given way to rebellious indignation. Annoyed by the news that they were to serve under the Chief as colonel, outraged that they were to be deprived of the right of choosing their own captain, and that the Laird's son, whom they regarded with an unanimous and unbounded hatred, was to be placed in immediate control of them, their rage had been mounting by leaps and bounds.

And now the news that they were to be under martial law (which they knew full well gave to the Chief and his son almost the power of life and death over them) was the last straw. Hardly a man among them but had taken part in the activities of the Black Boys, and of this they knew the Laird was well aware.

"'Tis a dirty plot av the Ould Tarrier to get the byes in his grip," muttered McGonigal.

"The man lies," flamed Peter. He turned to Craig. "Do ye ken aught, sir, o' martial law being proclaimed?"

"It has been proclaimed in Lower Canada," responded Craig, "but not, as far as I am aware, in the Upper Province yet," he added cautiously, "it may be so. And in that case he has the power to draft all of us into the service. But if he is acting under the old militia law, he has no such power. Do you intend to volunteer?" he asked suddenly.

For in the darkening brows and sullen countenances of the clansmen he read signs of certain mutiny.

"No!—no!—no!" they answered unanimously.

"Not a man—noo," put in Peter. "De'il a one o' us wull serve under him and Allan Dhu. 'Twud be but barin' our backs to the lash. He has tellt us as much himsal."

"Now, by Garrah!" exclaimed Murty, "we'll find out about that martial law. Do you spake up to him, Mr. Craig. Ye're our captain now. Ye have the l'arnin' to do it."

The enrollment of the Lanark and Fitzroy volunteers was completed and they were hurrying back to their places by the wall.

"Company three—the lads from McNab. Step lively, men," called the Chief.

From among the clansmen two men stepped to the table, Malcolm McPherson and Angus McBean, one of the Chief's foresters.

The Laird rose slowly to his feet, his face filled with a blank surprise that was rapidly ripening into fury.

"Did ye no hear me, men from McNab?" he shouted.

Not a movement among the clansmen. Stolidly their eyes met his and in their determined faces he read the indomitable stubbornness that has left its mark on the pages of history.

From across the room the enlisted men were regarding the Highlanders with lowering brows. But little love had there ever been between the settlers of the two southern townships, who almost to a man were Orange-Ulstermen and ultra loyalists—and the Scotchmen of the Laird's domain.

The Ulstermen had known for years of the conflict between the Chief and his tenants, and it was no surprise to them that these Highlanders, whom they believed to be still tinged with the hereditary poison of Jacobitism, should prove as disloyal to their Queen as they had been to their Chief. And the clansmen whose grandfathers had sacrificed their all for the last of the Stuarts had but little

sympathy with the admirers of William of Orange, who every twelfth of July celebrated the greatness and glory of the murderer of their kinsmen in the vale of Glencoe. Each came of a race that has long memories. The low murmur among the Ulstermen rose to an ominous roar.

"Cowards!—traitors!—rebels!" they hissed across the room.

"Cowards back agin in yer teeth—ye Ulster yalla bel-lies!" roared Murty McGonigal.

The Irishman's face was fiery red with passion and his fingers clutched his knotted blackthorn convulsively. The men, who were hurling epithets at him and his friends, were also his own hereditary enemies, and in his heart raged a hatred born of five hundred years of bloody persecution.

"Silence, men!" warned the Chief.

"But two o' mine own folk," he said, almost pathetically. "Then, by God! I must proceed to ballot and draft ye. MacTavish, prepare the ballots for the draft."

"Hold!" Barclay Craig, with uplifted hand, strode to the front. Undaunted, his gaze met the haughty glare of the Chief.

"We would know, Colonel McNab," he asked in a voice loud enough for all to hear, "on what date was martial law proclaimed in Upper Canada? Where is your authority for the draft? Have you a copy of the proclamation? We stand on our rights as British subjects."

Astounded by the boldness of the demand, the fearless bearing of the surveyor, all stood silent. The Chief's face was livid with fury. Allan Dhu, seated at the table, was biting his lips uneasily.

"My clansmen," demanded the Chief incredulously, "do ye doubt the word o' your Chief?"

"Aye, that we do!" came the frank and defiant response.

For an instant the Laird seemed dazed, then recovering himself he turned to the Chancellor.

"Give no heed to yon demagogue, MacTavish. Prepare

the papers for the draft," he ordered. "There be here enough loyal men to see my bidding done.

"Men o' Lanark and Fitzroy, wull ye stand by your colonel?" he demanded.

From the enlisted men came an unanimous shout of assent.

"Chief McNab," warned Craig, "have a care what you do. These men will not serve under you as volunteers and they will never submit to a draft without further proof of the establishment of martial law."

"I'll give no proof under compulsion," retorted the Laird. "The draft must gang on."

Already both factions were making deliberate preparation for the conflict, which now seemed inevitable. Many had doffed their coats, others were rolling up their sleeves and tightening their belts.

Craig's quick, comprehensive glance about the room grasped the situation. Penned within four walls, and outnumbered almost four to one, the Highlanders would be forced to yield. Their only hope of successful resistance lay in securing egress from the building.

At the table, the Chancellor with trembling hands was preparing the papers for the draft. Beside him stood the Chief, stern and inflexible. He drew his watch from his pocket and raised his hand in a final warning.

"One minute more I'll give ye, men o' McNab, then I wull declare ye all under arrest and take the ballots for the draft."

Not a man moved from his place.

Craig's eye sought the great double doors of the warehouse; he noted that in the intense but suppressed excitement of the last few minutes the Ulstermen had unconsciously drawn apart, leaving a comparatively open space between the clansmen and the exit. From his lips sprang a ringing shout:

"Men of McNab!—follow me!—rush the door!—altogether!"

His summons found them waiting. In one solid body,

they plunged towards the doors. The Ulstermen saw the move and flung themselves on the Highlanders from both sides, but too late. The clansmen had reached the exit, and now with their backs to the bars stood, shoulder to shoulder, defending themselves against their assailants. The fight was on.

Barclay Craig found himself in the centre of a throng of struggling, wrestling men. He saw one Ulsterman go down from a quick blow of Murty's shillalah, and caught a swift, side glance of Peter McIntyre striking another in the face. Then a fist full of knuckles crashed over his own eye.

Like a flash he struck back again and again, staggering his opponent under a shower of straight-armed blows and finally sending him to the ground with a terrific smash to the neck.

The fury of the primitive fighting man seized the soul and fired the brain of Barclay Craig, as with scientific precision he sent antagonist after antagonist reeling to the ground. Well now, indeed, stood by him the fistic skill he had acquired in many a gloved bout with his fellows in the purlieus of "Auld Reekie."

Yells, curses, the impact of thudding blows, all the roar and rage of savage personal combat, filled the room. Small heed was given to the injured. Here and there a disabled fighter was dragged from under the trampling feet of the combatants by a comrade who immediately returned to the fray.

Stern and stark fighters were the Ulstermen, almost as indomitable in spirit as the Highlanders themselves. Four of the clansmen and as many of their antagonists soon lay helpless on the ground. In silence Allan, MacTavish and Laird stood watching the conflict.

Closer and closer the huddled clansmen were being pressed against the barred doors. While those in front were engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with the enemy, the men in the rear were making an ineffectual effort to lift the heavy bar across the double doors.

“Rush them—men! Crowd them!—heads low!—now all together!” shouted the captain of the Fitzroy company.

In a solid mass they surged against the closely packed clansmen. Craig found himself penned between Peter and McGonigal. In vain he secured a throttling hold on the throat of an opponent forcing him back; the remorseless pressure behind his antagonist drove them breast to breast, each unable to lift arm or strike a blow.

A creaking of hinges, a rending of timbers, and the bar snapped in twain. The doors broken from their fastenings, collapsed outwards, precipitating the writhing tangle of fighters into the street.

Down—down under a mass of struggling, swearing, fighting men went Barclay Craig. In the *mêlée* his grasp found another throat and, as both rose to their feet, a familiar voice gurgled:

“It is me—Narcisse. Let go.”

As Craig released him and turned to face an Ulsterman, who had struck him, the Frenchman took to his heels and scampered like a scared rabbit across the street towards the sheltering doors of the McDonnell inn.

The brawny six-footer now facing Craig was no match for him. After a few exchanges, he turned away, his hands to his bleeding nose.

Craig glanced hurriedly about him. The day seemed going against the clansmen. Separated into groups of twos and threes, they were being surrounded and beaten to the ground. But nowhere was there any sign of surrender. Then he caught sight of Peter McIntyre lying gasping in the snow. A big Ulsterman was about to kick him in the face with his heavy boot, when Stewart, with a sobbing scream, flew at him like a tiger. Peter scrambled painfully to his feet, and in a moment the three were locked in a triangular grapple.

Above the noise of the fray rose the voice of Barclay Craig.

“Rally—men! Rally! Here to me! Get together! Get together!” he called in Gaelic.

"Aucharn!—Aucharn!" yelled Peter McIntyre.

It was the war-cry of the clan, the rallying call that had echoed over many a forgotten battlefield. Here, for the last time, was the age-old slogan to do service.

They heard and heeded. Murty, Stewart and Peter were soon at Craig's elbow. The straggling groups of fighting men with which the snow-clad street was dotted gradually dissolved, and in a few moments the clansmen, save those lying senseless in the snow, had gathered about them, again presenting a solid front to the encompassing enemy.

"Keep together!—to the inn!—to the inn!" Craig shouted in Gaelic, which few of the Ulstermen understood. "In front there with your stick," he ordered Murty.

"Faugh-a-ballagh!" roared the smith, as he brought his cudgel down on the nearest head.

Before his fierce onslaught the surrounding wall of men gave way, making a break towards which the Highlanders surged.

Inch by inch, foot by foot, they fought their way towards the veranda of the inn. To Craig's left, Peter McIntyre, his face streaked with blood, was fighting like a fiend; Stewart, his coat gone, his shirt torn to shreds, was giving blow for blow.

Leading the slow advance, fought McGonigal. About his ruddy head whirled his shillalah, a twinkling streak of glimmering black. As it flashed and fell, leaving behind it a train of battered heads and fractured limbs, the Irishman seemed transfigured in his berserker rage. High above the tumult of the fight rose the sound of his singing. In his own tongue he was intoning a barbarian battle chant, an improvised saga of the wrongs of his race:

"Glory be to all the saints,
That I should live to see it.
That I should meet them here,
Here in this far country,
Once more face to face,
Once more man to man.
Spawn of Ulster!

Glory be to all the saints.
That I should live to see it.
Oppressors of the faithful,
Murderers of God's anointed,
Tyrants of the penal days.
Glory be to all the saints.
Sorrows of weeping women,
Sobs of little children,
Dying in the famine years,
Cruelty of Cromwell's time,
Limerick's broken treaty stone.
Emmet and Wolfe Tone,
Sarsfield and Owen Roe,
Glory be to all the saints
That I should live to face them
Here in this far country."

Little by little the clansmen made good their desperate retreat. Around the door the battle raged with redoubled fury. Then the portal was suddenly thrown open from within. They rushed into the hall, and after a final struggle succeeded in closing and barring the door against their baffled pursuers. Yells of rage and derision greeted their disappearance.

Within the wide hall the breathless, battle-scarred fighters paused for an instant to gaze at one another. Not a man, save Murty McGonigal and Barclay Craig, but bore marks of the fray. Their clothing was reduced to rags. Blackened eyes and bleeding faces were everywhere. Outside a dozen of their number lay helpless on the ground.

"Dey are crowd dem by de window dere."

At the sound of Charbonneau's voice Murty turned like a flash, caught him by the collar, and shook him as a terrier shakes a rat.

"Ye damned spalpeen—ye run—ye run—I saw ye—ye dirty coward. No chum av mine are ye from this day on, Narcisse Charbonneau."

Narcisse's attempt at explanation was interrupted by a resounding crash, followed by a shower of splintered glass. A volley of stones thrown by the infuriated Ulstermen had demolished the window. A moment later the sash itself

was shattered to matchwood by a heavy timber. Outside the enemy were gathered for an assault on the opening.

Alex Stewart picked up a chair, swung it high above his head, smashed it against the wall, and grasped a heavy leg.

"We'll fight them—we'll fight them"—he was sobbing with rage and sheer physical exhaustion—"as long as a single man can stand."

From the throats of the clansmen came a yell of desperate defiance. In a twinkling Stewart's example was followed. Armed with pokers, brooms and pieces of broken furniture, they awaited grimly the next move of the enemy. Outside the menacing shouts rose louder and louder. They could hear the voice of Allan Dhu in drunken exultation:

"We hae them, lads. The window is forced. Who wull lead the way?"

No one noticed Narcisse Charbonneau, who had suddenly appeared in the hall doorway, a wooden pail in one hand, a tin dipper in the other.

As two of the Ulstermen threw their legs across the low window sill, Narcisse sprang forward and from the dipper in his hand shot a stream of scalding water full in their faces.

With screams of agony, they tumbled backward to the veranda. Their disappearance was greeted by the exultant cheering of the clansmen.

Craig hurried to the kitchen, where he found that the far-seeing Charbonneau had prepared a massive maple-sugar kettle, full of boiling water for just such a contingency. This was the explanation of his seeming cowardice. Every vessel in the inn was requisitioned and soon every opening in the building was guarded by a squad of men with an adequate supply of the scalding liquid.

But the men on the outside were not of a stock that yielded easily. Fired to recklessness now by the liquor dealt out to them with a free hand by Allan Dhu, they succeeded in smashing in the front door with a heavy log.

But even then no entrance was possible. Again and again they were driven back with blinded eyes and scalded faces.

As the triumphant yells of the victorious Highlanders died away, Craig noted without a sudden stillness. Then he could hear the deep voice of the McNab, mingled with that of another.

He stepped cautiously to the window in the gathering dusk. A mounted man, evidently a new arrival, was in consultation with the Laird, who stood at his saddle bow. About them crowded the listening Ulstermen.

Suddenly they broke into a glad cheer. The clansmen pressed to the window and stared questioningly towards the demonstration.

The group about the strange horseman parted and the Laird came striding towards the inn.

"Weel, my men," he announced through the window, "I hae cancelled the order for the draft. I hae grand news for all o' us. The rebellion is o'er. MacKenzie has been beaten at York, and has run away to the States. Von Schultz and his rebels hae been taken at the windmill at Prescott. The order for our regiment is countermanded. Ye can gang home, all o' ye."

"Call Mistress McDonnell," he ordered.

The landlady, her face red with weeping, came hesitatingly into the room.

"Mistress McDonnell, ye must no greet," he said. "I masel wull pay for aught damage to your house or furniture, if the government doesna. Send me the bill."

"Wi' ye lads," he added, with lowering brow, "I wull settle later."

Craig looked thoughtfully after him for a moment, then, turning to Peter and McGonigal, he said quietly:

"Violence can never win against the Laird. You must carry your case to the Governor."

"I start early in the morning for Montreal. I believe Lord Durham, the new governor, is there now. Do you men draft a petition, and I give you my word of honour that

I shall not rest till I have placed it in his hands. I have great hopes of Lord Durham," he added. "He is said to have instructions from the home government to make many reforms in the colony."

CHAPTER XIV

"LIKE A KNIGHT OF OLD"

YE'LL be tellin' the Governor the straight av it, Mr. Craig. May the saints guard ye, and the divil never catch up with ye," said Murty McGonigal, as he reached up to grasp the surveyor's hand.

"It wull no be far out o' your way, Mr. Craig," suggested Peter McIntyre, "to ride by the Rapids and give this note to my mother. 'Tis so she wull no be worrit about masel. We canna gang home for a day or two on account o' the hurt lads up-stairs," he explained. The darkness hid his sly smile, as he handed him the missive.

Half an hour after Craig's departure, McGonigal, who had been wandering inquisitively about the sleeping village, awoke Narcisse.

"Get up, Munsheer. Get a horse and folly Allan Dhu," he ordered. "Him and two others have just taken the road, and I'm thinkin' that mebbe they are after Craig. I'd go meself, but sure I want to stay here and keep an eye an the Ould Tarrier. If Allan goes to Kennell, 'tis all right, but if he don't, keep on follyin' him."

Narcisse, as he threw on his clothing, was chuckling softly to himself.

"Murty," he inquired. "W'ere did de Chief put him up dat big black horse of him—de one wit de fine fat tail?"

The Irishman took his pipe from his mouth and stared at his friend contemptuously.

"A foine toime it is," he snapped, "to be after asking foolish questions. Be aff with ye now."

Still chuckling, Narcisse hurried away.

Refreshed by six hours sleep, on through the night rode Barclay Craig. The clansmen had hearkened to his advice, and in his pocket was a petition to Lord Durham, the new Governor of both Upper and Lower Canada,—a petition written by Craig himself, which set forth in detail the wrongs of the settlers and asked for an investigation of the Laird's activities in the grant. It bore the names of every clansmen. Even the sorely wounded lying in their beds in the McDonnell inn had insisted that it be brought to them for their signatures.

And Barclay Craig, his soul afire with indignation at the shameful scenes he had witnessed, had determined that he would devote all of the wit and strength that in him lay, to the service of the sturdy fellows with whom he had fought shoulder to shoulder during the long hours of that January afternoon.

From now on, neither fear of loss of favour nor worldly prudence would swerve him in his loyalty to their interests. They were poor, many of them were ignorant, their location and their limitations prevented them from making their wrongs known to the world. That, he had resolved, would be his task.

A sad little smile came to his bearded face as he recalled the bitter words of Flora McIntyre, "lower than Lipsey." Well, henceforth the conclusions of his brain and the secret promptings of his heart would be in full accord, and never, never again would it be possible for her—for any one to cast in his teeth such a taunt.

In the grey of the winter sunrise, Barclay Craig rode up to the McIntyre home. As she opened the door, Mrs. McIntyre stared at him in surprise, but her face brightened as she perused Peter's letter.

"Thank ye, sir—thank ye kindly. Wull ye no stop and hae breakfast wi' us? We must all wish you success on your mission."

"No, no thank you, I have eaten, I must hasten," responded Craig, as he turned his horse away.

Her words were the first intimation to the surveyor

that Peter's note had communicated to his people the purport of Craig's mission.

Though he knew full well that his love for Flora McIntyre was not the thing of a day, Barclay Craig was a proud and keenly sensitive man. Until the lips that had uttered the words, that had seared themselves into his memory, should of their own free will retract them, he had no desire to cross the threshold of the McIntyre home, even as a bidden guest. Carelessly, cruelly, she had misjudged him, that he could not forget,—he could not forget. And now though all was changed, though he had cast his lot with her people, not until he had proven to her, by his deeds, the injustice of her judgment of himself, would he seek sight or speech of her. The withering phrase, “You are lower than Lipsey,” still brought the flush of hot indignation to his brow, as he rode on through the Flat Rapids settlement.

He glanced casually about him, then started, as he recognised the spot. Yonder on the gentle-rising hillside was the hazel copse, where he had interfered with Allan Dhu's unwelcome love-making. He sighed wearily, and rode on, his head bent in bitter thought, his heart aching within. So absorbed was he that he failed to notice a horse and rider emerging from the trees, a few yards ahead of him.

“Good-morning, Mr. Craig,” said a cheery voice.

He lifted his head to look into the face of Flora McIntyre.

The girl was without cap or coat. Her heavy black hair, broken from its hasty fastenings, had fallen in two Indian-like braids about her shoulders. Her face was flushed with excitement and embarrassment. Craig reined his horse, lifted his hat courteously, but did not speak.

“I read Peter's note but a moment ago,” she said nervously, “and I hurried by a short cut to overtake you, I—I—I——”

Over her face flooded a wave of crimson. Then though her mobile mouth was trembling, the old mischievous light flooded her eyes.

"I was afraid you—you might lose your way again."

Craig gazed at her without reply. Her eyes, as she waited for him to speak, were downcast, the dimples were coming and going about her pouting lips, while her fingers toyed nervously with the reins. The man remained silent; he could not speak. Wounded pride and yearning love waged bitter battle within his soul.

Again the girl's eyes sought his almost beseechingly. As she noted his silent sternness, her colour fled and an expression almost of dread darkened her countenance. She stepped her horse forward until they were side by side and facing one another.

"You make it so hard for me," she said, in a shaking voice, "you must guess without my telling you in words how—how—I regret what I said. But I could not understand, and cannot yet understand how you could—Oh," she appealed in choking voice. "How could you—how could you—a man like you—for you knew—about my father—You KNEW."

"When a lady," Craig began slowly, "lays upon a gentleman a command never to address her, the gentleman obeys until she has withdrawn her command. No, you are wrong. I did not know. I did not recognise the spot. It was dark when I was there before and I had no inkling of the Laird's purpose in driving such a road. I had never seen your father, you must remember, and, of course, could not recognise him."

The woman's lips parted and into her eyes came sudden comprehension.

"That night," went on Craig, "I broke with the Laird and——"

"I know—I know," she interrupted. "Peter has written us about it—the fight and the papers you carry."

"Oh—oh," she leaned sidewise in her saddle and laid her hand on his with a gentle pressure, "that I should have so misjudged you. It was cruel—cruel. Can you not forgive me?"

Her eyes were soft with the wild, sweet lure of maiden-

hood. Her face was raised to his; her lips trembling, the tear drops quivering on her lashes. Vanished now was the woman he had known and known but to love. In place of the frank, boyish comrade, the quick-witted, self-possessed girl was another Flora McIntyre, in every line of whose graceful figure and colourful face lurked the soft feminine appeal.

For a fleeting instant, the man gazed into her moisture-dimmed eyes, then something within his breast seemed to expand and melt. Like a flooding sea, his passion overswept him. He threw an arm about her and drew her to him, and kissed her on the lips.

“Forgive you—forgive you,” he murmured. “How can I do aught else when I love you so? Aye—loved you even when my heart was aching with the fear that you hated me.” For a moment the girl hid her face against his shoulder. He could feel the rise and fall of her bosom and the trembling of her form against his, then she drew away with an expression of injured pouting.

“Flora,” he demanded, “look at me. Tell me—oh, tell me—— Say you love me. Do not deny it. I have seen it in your eyes.”

No answer. But slowly, timidly, one hand stole upwards about his neck. Then as he gently lifted her chin with his fingers, her cheeks flamed with the ruddy signal of surrender; her eyes strangely brilliant now met his fairly.

“Man—Man,” she said in a deep thrilling whisper, both arms now about his neck, her face close to his. “I have loved you ever since the day you saved me from Allan Dhu.”

Alone they seemed in all the universe. The dark forest with its snowy carpet, was strangely silent. From behind a bank of clouds the morning sun broke forth bathing the woods in the radiance of a world new born.

“I will return in a short time,” began Craig. “Promise me that you will go back with me to Montreal as my wife.” The soul of the man shone in his eager exultant eyes.

For a moment the girl gazed at him, as if to read his

inmost self. Then as she drew away, her face clouded regretfully.

"No, no, Barclay, do not ask that yet,—not yet. I cannot give my word while danger and disgrace threaten my father. But yesterday a posse of constables from Perth entered our house by force and searched for him. They had a criminal warrant. And now at any time," she faltered, "he may be declared beyond the protection of the law—a man with a price on his head."

"No, no—he needs me—mother needs me and will need me more I fear in the days to come. And my first duty is to him and to her. You must not ask it. I love you too dearly to have you plight your troth to one who to-morrow may be the daughter of a man whom the law would call a criminal—a man who may be behind prison bars."

"And you think," he cried indignantly, "that even that would have weight with me?"

"No—no, dear, but I will not let you make the sacrifice. It would be easy—so easy for me to say 'Yes,' " she pleaded. "But I will not,—I must not,—I cannot. Only when this conflict is ended, then you may come to me. I—I shall be waiting.

"No—no, not a word," she laid her hand over his lips. "I must not, I will not hear you, though it so gladdens my heart to know that you would if I would let you."

She took up the reins. "Mother does not know where I am, or where I have gone. Remember that you bear with you more than your hopes or mine, you carry the hopes of the clan,—the hopes of my people."

Her voice grew low and tender, her melting eyes were fastened on his.

"You are fighting for them and for me,—their champion, my knight."

Carried away by emotion, Craig caught both her hands and held them tight in his warm firm grasp.

"Her knight—her people's champion." All the romance in his soul stirred within him and blossomed into life.

"Aye, Flora," he cried exultantly, "your knight. Give

me a badge as they did in the days of old. A badge that your knight may carry into the thickest of the fray.”

Gravely, the girl undid the silken scarf at her neck and handed it to him. As gravely he pressed it to his lips and placed it in his bosom.

“Good bye my—my man,” she said tremulously.

As he attempted to take her again in his arms, eluding him, for a smiling instant, she scanned his clouding face, then with one hand, she drew his head down and kissed him full on the bearded mouth.

“This time the knight shall have his fee. Go—go now. My prayers and my love shall follow you.”

She wheeled her horse about and was gone.

His head whirling, his uplifted heart singing pæans of joy, Barclay Craig rode on.

If ever man had an over-powering motive for success, it was himself, he reflected. “Her knight—her people’s champion,” the words warmed his heart, and sent the blood tingling to his finger tips.

He would not fail—he could not fail. How could any man fail in high achievement, with such a guerdon of happiness awaiting him?

On through Arnprior rode Barclay Craig, across the dam by Buchanan’s mills, now silent and deserted, on through the short Canadian winter day, past cabin and clearing, through open “brules,” by frontier settlements, stopping only to snatch a hasty repast at some pioneer home.

Dusk was gathering as he plunged into a long stretch of unbroken forest. He was now miles beyond the confines of the Laird’s domain, and in the neighbourhood of the little village of Torbolton, where he had planned to spend the night. The moon rode low in the sky, and he was anxious to reach the shelter of an inn before total darkness obscured the road.

Suddenly a strang noise caught his ear. He halted and listened. Again it came low and prolonged, the unmistakable sound of a man in pain. Some timber-cutter,

Craig concluded, pinned to the ground by a fallen tree or injured by the glancing blow of an axe. Great as was the need of haste, he could not leave the man a possible victim of the forest wolves, whose faint howlings he could hear in the distance.

"Where are you?" he called, from the saddle.

Again came the piteous moan apparently from the darkness to his left.

Dismounting, he waded through the snow, towards the shrubbery bordering the roadway. The low groans seemed straight ahead. He broke through the bushes, and glanced about him. A twisted figure lay on the ground at his feet.

"Where are you hurt?" he asked, as he dropped on one knee.

Even as he spoke, the arms of the seemingly injured man flashed about his neck. Two dark forms sprang from the adjacent gloom and threw themselves upon him.

So swift, so sudden, so utterly unexpected was the onslaught that Craig's struggles were hopeless. Half smothered by the heavy bodies weighting down his chest and knees, and the gripping fingers at his throat, he could feel the sharp bite of cords being drawn about his wrists.

"Enough, lads—let be," ordered a familiar voice.

The arms about Craig's neck relaxed. Assisted by one of his assailants, he regained to his feet, to face in the moonlight the triumphant eyes and sneering smile of Allan Dhu McNab.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

QUESTIONS were futile. With a great sinking of the heart Barclay Craig realised that the seeming cries of pain, that had brought him from the safety of his saddle, were but a bait for the cleverly contrived ambuscade that had originated in the brain of Allan Dhu McNab. He recalled now the face, which Narcisse imagined he had seen, at the window, while the petition was being written.

"And so, Craig," sneered Allan, "we meet again. Search his clothes, Angus, for the paper." He chuckled, as Angus drew the folded petition from Craig's coat and handed it to him.

McNab pocketed the document and the three waded through the snow towards the twin ridges of the roadway. Craig was assisted to the saddle, and in answer to a call, Donald, whose signal further up the road had warned the watchers of the surveyor's approach, appeared with the horses of the party, and the little cavalcade trotted on in silence.

Craig, his soul filled with anger and disappointment, rode on with bowed head. Bitterly he recalled the high hopes the clansmen had based on the success of his mission. A man better bred, better taught and wiser than themselves, they had thought him,—one more fitted to carry to the world the story of their wrongs, and he had fallen an easy victim to the first trap laid by their enemy.

But sudden as it came, the tide of discouragement ebbed, leaving him coolly calculating the possibility of escape. The petition with its list of incriminating names had passed

from his possession; he himself was a prisoner in the hands of a man who, he feared, would not scruple to do murder to attain his ends or to gratify a personal revenge. Each of his captors was armed. Backwoodsmen all, their aim was true and certain. It was now late, they must soon halt for the night; there would be moments when their watchfulness relaxed. Somehow, somewhere, in some way, there would be an opportunity of escape. Just now force would not avail, a time it was when guile alone could win the way.

The little procession of mounted men left the road, floundered through the untrodden snow of a deserted, stumped clearing, to the door of a log cabin, lonely and unkempt, the mute relic of some pioneer's unsuccessful struggle with the wilderness.

Curt orders in Gaelic from Allan, and the door was forced, revealing an interior bare save for a bunk against the wall, and a decrepit table. While two of the clansmen busied themselves with the care of the horses, the other soon had a fire blazing in the hearth. The rolls of blankets cast on the bunk, and the venison roasting on the coals, told Craig of his captor's purpose to spend the night there.

"Take your place by the door wi' your gun, Donald. Angus, loosen this fellow's hands, that he may eat a bit," directed Allan.

In spite of the untoward circumstances in which he found himself, Craig ate with relish the oaten bread and half-roasted meat. He was young and vigorous, and to youth and strength all things are possible. Any attempt to escape would probably be accompanied by a struggle. With true Scotch philosophy, he decided not to lose the slightest opportunity of preparing himself for it.

The meal ended, Allan Dhu produced a black bottle, and after swallowing a generous dram, handed it to his followers. Then he drew the petition from his pocket and pored over it by the fitful fire-light. As the ringing indictment of the Laird's misrule met his eye, he broke into a torrent of

profanity. He turned to Craig, his face twisted with passion, his voice quivering with rage.

"Ye be a handy man wi' the pen—ye scribbling dog. Ye who hae eaten at the table o' the McNab and sat by his hearth. 'Twas ye penned those lines that dub my feyther a tyrant."

He reached for the bottle and drank copiously. Already his loose mouth and reddened eyes told of a long debauch. The additional liquor seemed to lash him to uncontrollable fury.

"Who be ye," he screamed, "a starveling pauper o' a landgauger to put your poor merchantable wits agin the Laird o' McNab, the head o' a family that has consortit wi' kings—Ye damned sneaking spy."

Craig rose to his feet and without a word stood facing Allan Dhu in the flickering light. For a space the glances of the two men clashed like drawn swords. The cold settled fury and overwhelming scorn in the face of the surveyor daunted the son of the Laird, his gaze wavered and unconsciously he stepped back.

"Ha," he sneered, as he recovered himself. "'Tis a sight for the Gods ye be—a fine plucked cockerel. Glower and stare to your heart's content. As for this vile scurrilous screed——"

He stepped to the hearth and held the petition tauntingly over the flames. "'Twull ne'er reach the eye o' the Governor. Gaze your last——"

He was interrupted by the slow opening of the door. A blanketed Indian entered the room. Allan, the paper still in his hand, turned to stare at him inquiringly. In the insufficient light but little of the stranger's countenance was visible; the heavy fur of his bearskin cap shaded his brow; his cheeks were half hidden by strands of long coarse black hair; his mouth covered by the fold of his blanket which he held across his chin. But his black eyes, keen and penetrating, were busy searching the interior; Craig, his hands bound, seated on a log by the fire; the lounging forms of

the clansmen; and the flushed face and threatening attitude of Allan Dhu.

"Bo jo—Bo jo," he grunted. One brown fist drawn from beneath the blanket was lifted before his mouth, the knuckles out, the fingers moving slightly. Then his head bent till his ear rested for an instant in the palm of his hand. In the sign language he was asking for food and shelter.

"Donald," ordered Allan, after a surly inspection of the visitor. "Ye can talk their lingo a bit. Hae the fellow give an account o' himsal." He dropped the petition into his pocket and reached for the bottle.

Obediently Donald uttered some sentences of stammering Ottawa and the Indian with the folded blanket still across his chin made grave response.

"He says he's on his way to visit his sick feyther in Hochelaga. The man is verra tired wi' being on snowshoes all day and would spend the night wi' us," interpreted Donald.

Allan frowned. Then quick as lightning he shot a volley of personal abuse in French at the stranger, who had stood his snowshoes in the corner and was now bending over the fire warming his hands. Craig, seated close behind him, saw his back quiver slightly, but the brown face that met his as the Indian turned his back to the fire was impassive.

"Give the fellow a bit meat, Angus. Donald, tell him be can spend the night wi' us. 'Tis bitter cold. A McNab could no turn the De'il himsal away from his door a night like this," Allan stuttered in grandiloquent tones.

"And now, Craig," he said tauntingly in French, confident that none but he and the surveyor understood. "Ye may learn your doom. Make your peace with your Maker, for ye will never see another day."

"Before sunrise, I will see that this Indian goes about his business, and that the lads here are on their way. Ye will be bound well both feet and hands, and I'll put the torch to the cabin. It has been drying this many a year,

and will burn like tinder. Ye'll not call for help for I'll gag ye well. How like ye the prospect?" he queried, his bloodshot eyes bent gloatingly on the anxious countenance of the surveyor.

Craig stared in consternation at his taunting face. The liquor McNab had consumed seemed to have no other effect than to deepen the satisfaction in the crafty smile that wreathed his dark features. The surveyor feared that the man before him now half insane with liquor might be capable of carrying out his awful threat.

"These lads here," resumed Allan, after another visit to the bottle, "will know nothing of the matter. I will tell the tale, that I left ye some miles from here. Your horse will be found wandering in the woods. Ye will have disappeared. No one will dream but that ye lost your way—frozen to death or eaten by wolves. When some curious ones find in after years a charred bone or two among the ashes where once stood an old cabin, nobody will connect it with the fool surveyor who would have interfered with the governing of the Laird of McNab."

As Craig realised the satanic cunning of the scheme, the plausible explanation that McNab could give of his own disappearance, terror came very close to him.

Allan was grinning at him devilishly, as he noted the sudden paleness of Craig's face, the swelling veins on his temples, the tensing of his muscles as he unconsciously strove with the thongs on his wrists.

To die like a dog—the torturing death of fire. Through Craig's brain raced a wild idea of making a fight for his life, bound as he was. His feet were free. A pistol was lying on the table. With one swift spring he could reach it. Even with his pinioned wrists his fingers were free enough to grasp it and find the trigger. With the muzzle against the breast of Allan, he could not well miss his aim. Even if he failed, any manner of death was preferable to that pictured by McNab.

He drew back his feet, and was tensing himself for the leap towards the pistol, when his glance chanced to meet

that of the Indian. Then he sank back, every nerve tingling, every muscle limp.

For in the eye of the aborigine, as it looked fairly into his, bringing to him a strange sense of familiarity, was that which brought him to a sudden halt. The man, still standing by the fireplace, his back towards McNab was winking at him deliberately, not once but repeatedly with long pauses between. For an instant, the shadow of a smile hovered over the brown countenance, that immediately became as inscrutable as ever.

It was now nearing midnight, Allan Dhu glanced at his watch, and gave orders that all should awake in a few hours. Not unkindly one of the clansmen bound Craig's ankles and covered him with a blanket. A few feet away lay the Indian, already snoring soundly.

With eyes closed in simulation of sleep, Barclay Craig lay motionless. An hour passed,—an hour during which his soul was swept with the alternating surges of hope and despair. Could it be possible that the Indian was a friend? Or was the repeated drooping of the eyelid but a chance accident?

The silence remained unbroken save for the crumbling of the embers in the hearth, the sharp crackling of the frost-bitten walls, and the heavy snores of his captors. Occasionally, there came to the wakeful, quivering man, the long drawn howling of the wolves in the forest.

With a quiet sigh, the Indian rolled over on his back and lay still. His heavy breathing told of renewed slumber. Craig's heart sank like a stone; he was mistaken after all. What interest could a wandering aborigine have in the affairs of the Laird of McNab? He regretted now that he had not risked everything in one quick desperate struggle.

Again the long figure in the blanket sighed wearily, and rolled over on his left side. He was now but three feet away from the surveyor and facing him.

Slowly the eyes opened; they were staring into the wide open ones of Barclay Craig. Even in the dim light from

the sinking fire he could see the sly, deliberate drooping of the upper lid. Then they closed, to be followed by the regular breathing of a sleeping man.

With thumping heart, the surveyor waited. During the instant's full gaze of the aborigine, again had come to him that strange sense of recognition. Somewhere he had gazed into those eyes before. There could be no doubt now: again the Indian was shifting his position nearer to the prisoner; their blankets were almost touching.

Through Craig's inmost fibre ran a wild thrill of exultation. A hand was carefully fumbling beneath his covering. Now a sharp edge of metal touched his wrist, now it was cautiously sawing at his bonds, stopping occasionally as if the insensate steel was hearkening to the subdued sound of the sleepers. More than once the pinioned man felt the blade sink into his flesh. His start and the quick biting of his lip told the story to the other, whose wide open eyes were now staring smilingly into his. Then the bonds fell apart, and Craig felt the knife thrust into his hand.

With infinite caution he drew up his legs, and severed the thongs on his ankles; then lay motionless awaiting the next move of his rescuer.

Carefully the Indian lifted himself on one elbow and scanned the shadowed interior, listening intently to the regular breathing of the clansmen on the floor and the drunken snores of Allan Dhu on the bunk. Cautiously and noiselessly he removed his blanket, nodded to Craig and both arose to their feet.

Craig, quivering with the tension of the moment, felt a pistol being thrust into his hand. With a step as silent as that of a hunter stalking game, the moccasined feet of the Indian flitted about the floor. He was securing possession of the arms. But at the sight of Angus, who had sunk to slumber with his rifle lying under his outstretched arm, he hesitated, smiled, then shook his head. It would be hazardous to attempt its removal.

Every rifle save one now stood stacked in the corner, the Indian, another pistol in his hand, had taken his place before

them. Making a quick motion towards Allan, he touched his own garments. Craig grasped his thought. While the Indian stood guard over the weapons, he was to undertake the risky task of securing the petition from the coat of Allan Dhu.

With trembling fingers, the surveyor little by little drew back the blanket from the heaving breast of McNab. The sleeper stirred, muttered a few words, and the heart of the man bending over him, pistol in hand, seemed for a moment to stand still. For a few seconds, that seemed to Craig eons in length, he stood with arm upraised, ready to bring down the pistol butt on the temple of McNab as soon as his open eyes announced his awakening. Then Allan with a sleepy mumble rolled over, and the petition, gleaming white in the obscurity, half slipped from his pocket. A second later, it was hidden in the shirt of the surveyor.

Softly the two stepped out into the white-clad world, glistening silverlike beneath the mellow moonlight, and without a word waded through the snow towards the tumble-down stables.

"Watch," whispered the Indian in French, as he handed the three rifles to Craig. In a moment, he reappeared, with two of the saddle horses. As the animals emerged into the moonlight, one of them, annoyed at being disturbed from his slumbers, threw up his head in an enquiring whinny. Shouts of alarm from the cabin told of sudden awakening and a possible pursuit.

But they were off now, galloping madly down the road. Hardly a hundred yards away were they when a bullet whizzed above their heads. Glancing back, Craig could see their pursuers following in hot haste.

"That is their only shot," remarked the Indian in excellent French. "All the rest are here," he glanced down at the other rifles across his saddle.

No doubt now had Craig of the outcome; he knew the horse he bestrode; it was Allan's blooded stallion and he could not be overtaken. But the man's anger was flooding

high. The rage of battle filled his soul, and the memory of McNab's insults to a helpless man still rankled.

He halted, whirled his horse about, and drew bead on Allan. His rifle cracked and McNab and his mount went in a kicking heap to the snow.

"I am not much of a shot, but I hope I have killed him," he remarked to his rescuer, as they dashed on.

For two miles the wild gallop continued till their horses, in a lather of sweat, showed signs of exhaustion. As they rode into an open "brule" the dark sweep of trees about them began to take on form and colour and a roseate glow in the east told of coming day.

The Indian sidled his horse towards Craig's till they rode stirrup to stirrup. Then he snatched suddenly at his own head. With the bear-skin cap, came away the tangled mass of long black hair.

The soft light of the sunrise shone on the broad brow, the curly locks, and smiling face of Narcisse Charbonneau.

"You—you—Narcisse," exclaimed Craig. "Is it you? Gad, that was a close corner you got me out of—a thousand thanks, my boy," he said, as he grasped the Frenchman's hand.

"Non—non—point du tout. It was wan grand adventure. But me—I have loss me my nice moustache," he touched his bare upper lip regretfully, "and dat pokeberry juice will take him t'ree week to come off my face. And dis," he added, with a chuckle as he held up the long-haired wig. "Dis was made from de hair of de tail of de Chief's bes' horse."

"Go—go—Monsieur Craig," he urged, as he pressed the surveyor's hand. "Ride like de win'. De hope of de people ride wit' you. Au revoir, Monsieur. May de bon Dieu guard you."

With a final flash of his bright eyes, Charbonneau turned a corner and dashed off on a road leading to the grant.

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE WAKE OF WAR

UP Notre Dame Street in Montreal strode Barclay Craig.

Gaunt and worn, his eyes red from lack of sleep, his clothing faded and wrinkled from long hours in the saddle, he bore but little resemblance to the well-groomed gentleman, who, seven months before, had left the metropolis for the wilds of the Upper Ottawa.

Even to the surveyor, fresh from the peaceful solitudes of the woods, the city seemed strangely silent. Beneath its unwonted quietude, he sensed the repressed excitement of the populace. For six weeks now, Montreal had been held in the relentless grip of martial law, and as he passed he noted the gathering groups of loungers, at a word from the soldiers who patrolled the streets, melt silently away. The shrill notes of the fife and drum held his attention for a moment, as a regiment of regulars with arms aslant, and colours flying, marched by on their way to the Eastern townships.

As he hastened on, his thoughts reverted to his mission. For nearly a week he had been held a prisoner at L'Original, by an over-zealous lieutenant of the militia, till the arrival of the colonel, who proved to be an old Montreal acquaintance of Craig's, had secured his speedy release.

Of what had transpired in the meantime he was in complete ignorance. Had the revolt been crushed or were the insurgents gathering their forces for a final struggle? Where was Lord Durham, and how could he secure an interview with him?

"Craig—you here," cried a thin, clear voice, as a hand

fell on his shoulder. "Great Guns!—thought you were in the back-woods."

The surveyor grasped the outstretched hand, and his face lighted pleasantly.

"Hincks,—by all that's holy. I was thinking of you but a moment ago."

A hollow cheeked, keen-eyed, sharp-nosed man was Hincks, the editor and proprietor of the *Examiner*, the journal that for more than five years had waged unrelenting war on the Family Compact. Stormy petrel of the pioneer newspaper world, he was a prototype of the yellow journalist of our own day. Hardly a public man in either province but at one time or another had come under the lash of his stinging invective. Unflinching he had supported the reform leaders and the legislatures in their struggle with the royal governors, but at the first clash of arms his vitriolic pen had been turned against them, and he had denounced Papeneau, Rolph and MacKenzie as harebrained enthusiasts, and armed resistance as the height of folly. Yet, convinced as he was of the futility of an appeal to force, he had not weakened for a moment in his hostility to the Family Compact. Side by side with his denunciations of the insurgent leaders, he was printing from day to day eloquent appeals to Lord Durham, imploring him to investigate the conditions that had led to the uprising. During the last two years he had been twice under arrest, and only the fact that he had always kept cautiously within the letter of the law, and that his paper was now advising submission to the authorities, had saved him from punishment.

During his stay in Montreal, Barclay Craig had met the man several times, and while to his cautious mind Hinck's ferocious editorials had frequently seemed ill-timed and indiscreet, he had considerable admiration for the editor's ability and much confidence in his sincerity. On one occasion he had been of some slight service to him.

"For heaven's sake, man," Craig questioned, "tell me the

news. I have heard nothing—nothing—since the affair at Prescott.”

The journalist shook his head, then with his thumb motioned silently down the street. Craig understood and without a word the two walked several blocks and passed into the office of the *Examiner*.

Hincks sank into a chair and threw up both hands with a gesture of despair. Then he broke out in his jerky disconnected fashion:

“It’s all over—Nelson and his habitants beaten at St. Charles—three hundred captured—poor deluded fools—damn MacKenzie and Papineau anyway—told them how it would be—months ago—God, it’s awful,” he groaned. “Jails here all full—hanging them every day by the dozen, but—what brings you back—thought you had a life billet with McNab.”

In as few words as possible Craig related his experiences of the last eight months, the tyranny of the Laird, their quarrel, the fight at Sand Point, and the petition to the Governor.

Hincks’ eye glistened and he rubbed his hands in joyful anticipation. Here was material for a sensational attack on the Laird of McNab, whom he had known for long as an associate of the members of the Family Compact—material, bizarre, and startling, which even in the present disturbed state of the public mind, he could publish without incurring the displeasure of the authorities. Eagerly he reached out his hand for the document.

“Good—good, Great Guns! Let me have it—let me have it.”

“No—no,” objected Craig. “It must go first to the Governor. Where can I find him?”

“Durham’s not here—gone to Quebec—be gone three weeks. But McNab’s here—son along with him—both scouring the city for you.”

Craig started. Allan and the Chief in Montreal and searching for him. But one explanation was there of their presence in the city. They were still determined to re-

cover the petition and prevent its presentation to the Governor. He was well aware that the Chief's influence, might be sufficiently strong to secure his own arrest on some trumped-up charge. Whatever happened to himself he quickly concluded that the precious document must be placed beyond their reach. Hincks was the very man.

"Hincks, I did you a favor once, can you help me now?" he queried.

"What is it? You have decided to publish it after all?" The newspaper man's face was bright with anticipatory hope.

"No—no, not just now,—not yet."

Hincks looked his disappointment, but listened attentively, as Craig went on.

"I want you to take this petition in charge. But first give me your word of honour that you will let no one know of its existence, nor let it pass from your possession, and that you will not publish it until I give you permission."

"Humph," grunted the journalist. "Well, I promise, but when may I expect to print it?"

Craig, with a smile at the man's eagerness, handed him the document. "I'll leave this with you too," he said, as he placed a buckskin sack of coin beside the paper.

"Of course," he added, half jocularly, his hand on the door knob. "If you hear of my death, it relieves you from your promise. In that case, you may print it, but before you do, see that it gets to the Governor."

Hincks sniffed incredulously. "All right—I'll do it. One never can tell—these days," he commented, as he locked the petition and the money in his desk.

Craig hurried away. For forty-eight hours, he had not slept, and the need of a bath and a change of raiment was imperative. Lord Durham would not return to the city for three weeks, and meanwhile there were sundry affairs of his own that required attention.

Up the street sounded the measured tread of marching men. Surrounded by a square of gleaming bayonets came a score of manacled prisoners. The blood-stained rags

about their heads and arms told eloquently that they had borne themselves like men. Sturdy, stolid, French-Canadians of the "habitant" class, they trudged on through the slushy snow with downcast mien, save one slender, bright-eyed lad whose finer features and haughty air spoke of a social status far above that of his comrades in misfortune. His uncovered head was proudly erect, and his fine eyes looking out from his bruised and bloody face swept the silent, staring crowd with contemptuous indifference.

Sighing wearily, Craig turned away. How would it all end, he wondered. Surely the home government must soon awaken to the necessity of giving the Canadas an administration more in accord with the spirit of the time. Perhaps after all, this seemingly unnecessary bloodshed would not be altogether in vain.

Suddenly he halted with a muttered exclamation. Twenty yards away stood Allan Dhu McNab, in close conversation with a scarlet-coated army officer.

Craig hesitated; he was tempted for a moment to turn, retrace his steps, and thus escape detection. Then over him swept a wave of anger. Why should he, a law-abiding British subject, shrink and cower at the sight of any man? At any rate boldness was the better policy. But as he strode on down the street, he cautiously thrust himself into the midst of a group of passersby.

In an instant he was around the corner, and slackened his pace with a great breath of relief.

Then above the snow-scuffle of passing feet and the rattle of vehicles he heard McNab's startled cry:

"By God—there he gangs noo."

A hand, firm and determined, fell on his shoulder and another voice announced:

"I place you under arrest, sir, in the name of the Queen." It was the red-jacketed army officer. At his elbow stood Allan regarding Craig with grim and smiling satisfaction.

"Ye made a fine run for it, Craig," he jeered. "But ye are noo at the end o' your tether."

"You are making a mistake," Craig said to the soldier, without deigning to notice Allan's insolence. "With what am I charged?" he asked.

"That," returned the other stiffly, "you will learn at the proper time. Will you come with us peaceably, or shall I sound an alarm for assistance?"

Resistance was impossible; further parley was useless.

"Lead on," said Craig, with a gesture of resignation. "I will accompany you."

As the three climbed the stone steps of a large building, which Craig recognised as the seat of the judicial activity of the city, his mind was busy speculating as to the nature of the charge against him. Conscious as he was of his own innocence, yet the social and political influence of the McNab, added to the disturbed state of public sentiment, might bring about results disastrous as unforeseen. But his heart lifted at the thought that come what might to himself, the petition was beyond the reach of the Chief, or any pliant emissary of the law, and in the hands of a man who could be trusted to further its purpose.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GUILF OF ELLEN MCPHERSON

S EIZED the Laird's horse—for the road money—the sheriff himsal?" gasped Sandy Fisher, as he stared through the flickering candle light at Fergus McPherson, seated on the other side of the table.

"Aye, that he did," returned McPherson. "The Laird had to borrow the money from Craig Durroch to get him out. 'Twas the doing o' Donald McNaughten."

McPherson had just returned from the assizes at Perth with an astounding tale of the Chief's discomfiture. Donald McNaughten, one of the substantial settlers of the grant, who hitherto had no cause for complaint against the McNab, had on the Chief's recommendation been appointed road commissioner under the new municipal act. But later, he had come into conflict with the Chief over a question of timber. McNaughten was a man of some means and acting on the advice of his attorney, he had in his official capacity instituted suit for the amount of the road-money. The court had given judgment against the Laird and ordered the sheriff to levy on his goods.

"But the timber case agin Donald?" queried Fisher. "How did that gang?"

"McNaughten lost it. He was fined fifteen pounds for cuttin' on the Crown lands. It fashed him sore and he hired a smart callant o' a Yankee lawyer to start the road-money suit. When we were coming out o' the court-house after the hearin' o' Donald's case the Laird was feelin' in fine fettle and says he to Donald:

"'See noo, Donald, what it is to oppose your Chief.'

"And sez Donald—he was aye glib wi' his tongue. 'See

noo, Chief, what it is to be keepin' the people's money from them. Your horse is seized and wull be sold, if ye dinna hand the road money o'er to masel.' "

" 'Hoot, mon,' sez the Laird. 'They'd no dare. Ye better no be getting up any more petitions agin masel.' "

"And up speaks Alec Stewart and sez 'That we wull. We wull send a dozen o' them, noo that Lord Durham's has come out.' "

"And Feigs, man," he concluded, "when the Laird went o'er to the stables his horse was in the possession o' the sheriff."

Ellen McPherson, seated at the end of the table, was listening with close attention, but she gave no sign. Her knitting needles clicked on monotonously. Old Sandy's wrinkled visage twisted in perplexity and his bony jaw worked convulsively. He was shocked beyond expression.

"I'd no hae thought it o' Donald. 'Tis no right—'tis no right," he repeated. "'Tis no a fit way for a clansman to comport himsal towards his Chief."

"'Tis no," agreed McPherson, "but I'm thinkin' we've no heard the ending o' that. The Laird is more than a match for all o' them. He'll be puttin' McIntyre ahint the bars soon, I'm thinkin'. They were sayin' afore I quit Perth——"

He stopped abruptly, his eye fell on his daughter.

"Lass," he commanded shortly. "Ye can leave Sandy and masel alone for a bit."

Obediently the girl laid aside her work, and throwing a shawl about her shoulders stepped out into the starlit night. A soft, moist, breeze laden with a distant promise of spring whispered among the tree-trunks and breathed warm on her cheek. Leaning on the top bar of the gate, she gazed thoughtfully at the woods, black and sullen, and the snow-clad fields, scintillating with myriad tiny facets of frozen light.

She sighed wearily. What had her father's words portended? Why had he so suddenly sent her out of ear-shot? Could it be possible that the Chief was planning

some sudden move against the McIntyres? But he had gone from Sand Point, directly to Perth, and was not expected home for several days.

Close at hand sounded the crunch, crunch of footsteps in the soft snow. Amelia Graham, staff in hand, came hobbling up to the bars.

"Ellen—Ellen lass," she whispered. "There's trouble at the McIntyres'. Come wi' me."

Without a word the two crept between the bars and following a well-beaten path through the woods, cut across lots towards the McIntyre home.

As they emerged from the obscurity of the forest into John Mohr's clearing, their eyes fixed anxiously on the house a few yards distant, the silence of the night was cleft by a shot. A woman's scream and voices raised in loud contention followed in quick succession.

"The constables, Amelia—'tis the constables," gasped Ellen, her hand on her heart.

"Come on, Lass—come on," soothed the old woman, "they wull no harm us."

A sudden square of golden light flashed visible in the black wall of the building. The back door had been opened. For an instant against the yellow oblong were silhouetted the forms of struggling men. Then they toppled in a writhing mass into the obscurity without.

As the two women hurried towards them they heard the quick command,

"Let be, lads."

Three of the men rose to their feet. One lay bound and panting on the snow.

"Put that buffalo coat on him and put him in the sleigh. Cover him with the robes; it is growing cold," ordered one.

As the pinioned man was lifted to his feet, his flaming angry eyes fell full on the two silent women.

"The dogs hae got us at last. Feyther's shot," gasped Peter McIntyre.

The girl smothered a sob of helpless indignation, and quickly followed Amelia into the house.

In a chair sat John Mohr McIntyre, his iron visage set with pain, his naked, well-muscled arm outstretched on the table. Mrs. McIntyre, in a crumpled heap on a bench, was sobbing hysterically. About them stood the constables, some stolidly indifferent, others, their concern manifest in their faces.

Flora McIntyre, though inwardly quivering with excitement and indignation, was outwardly calm, as she examined the bullet hole in her father's bulging biceps. She was biting her lips in an effort to still their trembling, and in spite of her agitation, her clear alert mind had wrenched every thought to the matter at hand. She was thinking and planning for all.

"Amelia," she directed, "a basin and bandages. It is not serious."

The blow long dreaded and long deferred had fallen at last and that when least expected. Confident that the Laird's absence at Perth secured him for a time at least from molestation, John Mohr had ventured on spending the evening with his family. They could not know that the Laird outraged beyond measure by the seizure of his horse, had obtained the consent of the court for the organisation of a posse of constables, for the purpose of effecting McIntyre's capture.

Hardly had the evening meal begun, when the door was forced and the constables burst into the room. One of them covered McIntyre with a pistol and demanded his surrender. A stool in Peter's hand sent him to the floor, and in the mêlée that followed the weapon was accidentally discharged. Still fighting furiously the lad was rushed out the door, bound securely and placed in the sleigh.

"Hurry with those bandages, miss," said the deputy, rather brusquely. "We must start at once."

The girl raised her head and transfixed him with a cold and casual scrutiny.

"You will surely not insist on taking him away till his

wound is properly dressed," she said, as she tore the linen into strips. "Even if you serve a brutal master," she added bitterly, "you have no need to lower yourself to his level."

Amazed at the woman's courage, at her proud patrician manner, at the cold contempt in her glance, the deputy found himself for a moment speechless. Could this be the daughter of McIntyre, the dangerous old outlaw,—this lady-like, dignified, young woman, with her air of conscious superiority.

"Yes, Miss," he said almost humbly. "We will wait. John, guard the young fellow in the sleigh. I am very sorry," he went on, "that this has occurred. We did not wish to harm him. We had orders not to do so."

Ellen and Amelia, who had been comforting the grieving mother, were now slowly assisting her towards the door of another room. As they laid her on a cot and covered her with a blanket, the girl turned to Amelia and grasping her shoulders with both hands almost fiercely, whispered into her ear. The older woman listened, something akin to a smile on her thin lips; then she nodded approvingly.

As Ellen in response to Flora's request for a needle and thread approached the table, she bent close to her for an instant. No one caught her quiet murmur.

"Take your time—be as long as ye may."

A quick flash of Flora's eyes bespoke comprehension and consent.

The night had turned cold, the stars had faded and from the grey expanse overhead the fine dust-like flakes were drifting down. A searching wind, growing ever chillier, was swaying the branches and swirling the dry snow underfoot. From the fur-covered figure in the sleigh-bed came no sound. The constable, standing by the horse's head, gun under his arm, turned up his collar and pulled his cap further down over his ears.

"Be ye from the grant?" asked a tremulous voice at his elbow.

"No, Graunie, from Lanark. Saunders' my name."

"Saunders," Amelia Graham crept nearer and peered up into his face. "Ye're no John Saunders' son, be ye—John Saunders o' Tayside in Perthshire?"

"Aye. Feyther's been deed noo these four year," he answered soberly.

A wind swirl sent the snow flying about them. The old woman shivered a little and drew her shawl closer.

"It grows bitter cauld, Graunie," he said kindly. "Ye had better gang in."

"'Tis that, lad. Weel, John Saunders' son, I kened your feyther weel and though I no like the company I find ye in, for auld syne's sake, I'll make ye a drap toddie to keep out the cold. Come in wi' me."

The man glanced about him doubtfully. The snow was coming down with fury and the wind was humming in the tree tops over head.

"Come, lad," Amelia insisted. "The folk wullna mind an auld body like masel. Ye can warm yersal by the kitchen fire the whilst I make the toddie."

With a final glance at the patient horses, standing with drooping heads, in the fast deepening snow and the fur-swathed figure in the sleigh, he followed Amelia into the house.

As the door closed behind them, Ellen McPherson stole from the corner of the house, and rushing to the sleigh threw off the robes. Once, twice, something bright flashed in the dim light from the kitchen window.

To his feet sprang Peter McIntyre. His arms went about the girl, and his lips met hers in one swift, short caress.

"Gang—Gang noo," she panted.

In great bounding leaps, he plunged through the snow towards the darkness of the pines.

A moment later, the guard reappeared at the kitchen door. Striding to the sleigh, he scrutinised it carefully for an instant, then heaved a sigh of relief, as he noted the long fur-covered mound seemingly undisturbed.

Within, the deputy had grown impatient at the long delay.

"Can you hurry a little, Miss McIntyre? It grows cold and I fear the lad in the sleigh may suffer."

Flora glanced towards Amelia, whose almost imperceptible nod told her all she wished to know.

"I am finished now," she said quietly. "Will you see that he has a surgeon immediately on his arrival at Perth?"

The officer assented, and John Mohr McIntyre bade his wife and daughter farewell, and took his place on the seat of the sleigh with the driver.

As the tinkling of the sleigh bells faded in the snow-filled night, the girl hurried to her mother with words of comfort. Then she sought through the house for Ellen for some explanation of her mysterious conduct. But Ellen and the old woman as well had disappeared.

"We have McIntyre, Chief," announced the deputy as two hours later the sleigh drew up at the door of Kennell Lodge, "John Mohr was hurt a bit, and the young lad fought like a wild cat. We have arrested him for resisting an officer."

"Ye hae done weel, Madigan."

John Mohr McIntyre was ushered into the room.

Face to face, eye to eye, the two masterful men confronted each other. The Laird, imposing, well-groomed and resplendent in his velvet jacket and chequered kilt; McIntyre, hatless, disheveled, his wounded arm in the sling his daughter's fingers had fashioned.

Yet strangely alike were they, the proud chieftain and his rebellious clansman. Alike in their six feet of stalwart, mature manhood, in the straight cheek, the long firm-set chin, that make the strength of the Scottish face. Still more alike were they in the firm belief that each held in the eternal righteousness of his cause, and in the steel-blue eyes that were now holding each other in a silent battle for mastery. For though wounded and a prisoner, no sign

of flinching was there in the levelled gaze with which John Mohr McIntyre met the haughty stare of the Chief.

The constables, awed by the dramatic intensity of the scene, stood with eyes fastened on the motionless figures of the two antagonists.

"So, John Mohr McIntyre," said the McNab gravely, "I hae ye at last. See noo what your stubbornness has brought ye to. 'Tis regretful I be to deal so wi' a clansman."

"Chief McNab," said McIntyre slowly, "I am strangely minded o' another scene twelve years ago in Perthshire. A man hunted by the law lay one night at Leney House. And the officers o' the law in hot pursuit o' him stoppit at the Clachan o' Glenogle to wet their thrapples. One clansman divined their purpose and he kilt his only horse, galloping through the night to warn the fugitive who was off two hours afore the officers arrived. The fugitive from the law, Chief McNab, was yersal and the man who rode wi' the warning to Leney House was masel. And this night," he added bitterly, "I hae my reward."

The Laird's lips parted in surprise but he instantly recovered himself. His mouth hardened.

"If that be true, John Mohr McIntyre, ye did weel," he said loftily, "but no more than any loyal clansman would do for his own Chief. 'Tis a great pity ye hae changed so for the worse since crossing the water. If ye hadna, ye wudna be where ye are noo. Do ye ken, John Mohr, that I could hae had ye declared an outlaw if I were to push the case agin ye for deforcing a magistrate in the discharge o' his duty, that day o' the road survey. But I willna. After all, ye be mine own clansman."

He turned to the Chancellor. "Serve noo on John Mohr McIntyre, the papers consarning the bonds. We'll hold him under that charge only. And ye wull write at once to the Queen's Counsel at Perth, axing it as a personal favour to masel, that the case against McIntyre for deforcing a magistrate be postponed indefinitely."

MacTavish stared wonderingly at the Chief. "Man, man, ye dinna mean it?" he gasped.

"Do as I bid ye," snapped the Laird.

Shaking his head forebodingly, the Chancellor fulfilled all the legal requirements by pressing a summons into McIntyre's hand a moment later, which placed him under formal arrest.

"Noo, Chancellor," directed the Laird, "make out a complaint agin the lad for resisting an officer and we'll give him a trial at once. All the witnesses be here."

Attentive to the clash between the Chief and McIntyre none had given any attention to the fur-swathed figure of the other prisoner, who with bent head sat on a chair near the door.

The Chief took his seat on the dais; MacTavish, paper in hand, droned out:

"Oyez, Oyez, I do noo declare this court open in the name o' the Queen."

"Peter McIntyre," commanded the Laird. "Ye wull uncover your head in the presence o' the Court."

The fur-clad figure rose to its feet. One hand swung suddenly free; the heavy fur cap was plucked off and dashed to the floor.

In the flare of the candlelight stood Ellen McPherson, smiling, radiant, triumphant.

"Put me ahint the bars, if ye wull, Laird o' McNab," she cried exultantly, "but ye'll no take Peter. He has an hour the start o' ye."

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE SHADOW OF THE SCAFFOLD

AS Barclay Craig followed his captor and Allan into the crowded courtroom, his eyes swept the packed assemblage for a glimpse of the kilted figure of the McNab. The Chief was nowhere in sight. But close behind he heard the whispered query of the army officer:

"Your father—will he be here to press the charge against the prisoner?"

"Aye," responded Allan, in a low tone. "He came in this morning, having ridden post-haste from the grant. He would hae been here sooner but that he was detained by legal matters at Perth."

The great room was strangely silent. Ranged along the wall, behind a file of armed soldiers, stood the unfortunate rebel prisoners, whose passing Craig had noted a few moments ago. On the dais, behind the desk, where usually sat a bewigged and begowned judge, a corpulent and red-faced officer was in the act of placing on his head a black cap. In the hushed stillness he heard the low words addressed to the prisoners.

"You have been taken with arms in your hands in the act of rebellion against Her Gracious Majesty, the Queen. You have been found guilty. The sentence of the court is that you, Jean Dupré and you—" he ran glibly over the list of names from the paper in his hand, "within the next ten days, at an hour to be fixed by the warden of the Montreal prison, be hanged by the neck until you are dead and may God have mercy on your souls."

A woman's scream cut the air like a knife. Above the

tumult that followed the voice of the Provost-marshal rose high and commanding:

"Remove that woman. Order in the court."

To Barclay Craig, the words of Hincks reverted like a sudden blow "Hanging them by the dozen—jails all full." His heart constricted as if a mighty hand had clutched it. Until now it had slipped his memory that the civil law with its safeguarding provisions for the rights of the accused had been superseded by the swift procedure and merciless rigour of the martial law. If charged with some offence and imprisoned awaiting trial no writ of habeas corpus could be obtained—he could not be released on bail. As he pondered, the McNab, resplendent in kilts and sporran, entered the room. He nodded familiarly to the Provost-marshal and bending one lowering glance on Craig took his seat.

As the tramp of the prisoners died away, the officer who had effected Craig's arrest stepped to the desk and whispered in the ear of the Provost-marshal.

"Barclay Craig," called the clerk of the Court, a moment later.

"Here," he rose to his feet.

"You are charged with having incited a mutiny among Her Majesty's troops at Sand Point, in the district of Bathurst, on the 6th day of January, 1838. How do you plead?"

The announcement came to Craig as a distinct shock. He had expected that the Laird would charge him with debt or having broken his contract with him—methods which the Chief had used successfully against some of his recalcitrant clansmen. Serious enough at any time, the offence of "inciting mutiny" was now doubly so. For a fleeting second he weighed the possibilities. Sand Point was in Upper Canada; martial law had not been declared in that province; the alleged offence had taken place before the men had been enlisted. In such technicalities lay a possible defence. Yet he was not sure; he would require expert advice.

"Am I to have counsel?" he parried.

"If you wish." The Court turned towards the door, where stood a smooth-faced young officer, attired in the sombre tartan of the Black Watch regiment. "Lieutenant Graham, you will defend this man."

But before his appointed defender could reach Craig's side the McNab was on his feet.

"May I crave the indulgence o' the Court for one moment? 'Tis a wee bit irregular, but as I be the complaining witness in this case, I would state that there's a possibility o' my bein' mistook. Could the Court grant me the favour o' a personal interview wi' the prisoner? I may find that there is room for doubt, and in that case I would wi'draw the charge."

"Certainly—certainly," responded the Court. "You may have a half-hour."

"Craig," began the Laird, when they were alone together in an adjoining room, 'ye be a young man o' rare personality and fine ability. But ye must ken that such gifts alone will no carry a man far wi'out the favour o' the great. Dinna be a quixotic fool—fashin' your head about those that can only drag ye down, no lift ye up. To present such a petition to the Governor wud identify yersal wi' the discontented o' the land, a verra dangerous position for a man these days," he concluded significantly.

"Well," demanded Craig shortly. "What have you to propose?"

The Laird studied the young man's face. It was impassive, unreadable.

"Give me that paper ye hae," he said, "and I'll give ye my promise that the charge agin ye wull be dismissed. Otherwise it wull gang hard wi' ye. 'Twas a clear case o' sedition at Sand Point."

"And you are willing," Craig retorted, "to compound sedition in order to attain your own private ends. No, you cannot have the paper."

"Then, I'll take it by force," threatened the Chief.

In answer to his call, two prison attendants came bustling into the room.

"This fellow," he blustered, "I fear has no been searched. For my own protection I ax that ye gang through his clothes."

As the bootless search was completed, Craig smiled as he noted how the Laird's air of assurance had changed to one of exasperation.

"What hae ye done wi' it?" he thundered, when the attendants had left the room. "Destroyed it?"

"No—it is safe—where you will lay no hands on it."

The Laird took a turn across the room. He halted face to face with the surveyor, who stood regarding him curiously.

"Man—man," he protested, as he took a seat. "Surely ye can see the unco' bad fix ye be in. Come, come, lad, get it for me noo, and ye can gang free in an hour."

"No."

"Craig," the Chief lowered his voice. "Name your price—a thousand pounds—two thousand pounds."

A shake of the head was the only answer.

"By God, I'll e'en make it five thousand pounds. Take it, ye fool, and make yersal safe for life."

"Laird of McNab," said Craig impressively, "I have given my word to your clansmen that the petition shall reach the Governor. You have known me for many months. What have I ever done that would lead you to believe that I could be bribed?"

"Heuch—heuch," sniffed the Chief, as he paced up and down the room. Again he flamed into hot anger.

"If I press the charge o' mutiny and sedition agin ye, ye wull swing. If I let it gang further 'twill be out o' my hands. I canna save ye then. Ye dam fool—would ye gang to the gallows?" he demanded.

Craig made no reply.

"Then I warn ye noo," he shook a menacing forefinger in the other's face. "If ye gang out o' that door wi'out tellin' me the whereabouts o' that paper, ye gang to your death. I wull hae no mercy on ye. Ye may hae ten min-

utes to make your choice." He drew out his watch and laid it on the table.

For a space, there was silence in the little room. Craig stood, his arms folded, regarding the Laird steadfastly. Through the square of the barred window a shaft of sunlight fell across his face, outlining his clear-cut, sensitive features, the big hazel eyes now veiled in perplexity, and the bearded chin, that was quivering a little with the tumult of his thoughts.

He had just been a witness of the swift ruthlessness with which martial law crushed its defenceless victims, and there was but little reason to doubt the intensity of the Laird's purpose. Though outwardly impassive, for the first time in his life the cold clutch of fear had him in its grip.

He was young, strong, healthy and wholesome. The ruddy currents of life were sweeping, smoothly and serenely, through his veins. He had no wish to die. And now in the few moments given to him, he must make this momentous decision. In the tense silence of the room, the ticking of the watch on the table could be heard distinctly.

He turned his back on the Chief and gazed upward through the barred window into the clear azure of the unspotted sky but it brought no peace to his storm-tossed soul.

To yield meant the winning of life and liberty, but at what a price,—the breaking of his pledge to the clansmen, the loss of his own self-respect, and (his heart faltered at the thought) the loss of the only woman who in all his twenty-eight years had stirred his soul to its uttermost depths—not only her loss but possibly her undying contempt. It meant the end of all that made for him a life worth while.

And to refuse—and in a few days in all probability his body enwrapped in its fiery shroud of quicklime could be lying beneath the prison yard, and he himself would be numbered among the myriad forgotten things that were. Of what avail then his love or his hate, his loyalty to his

trust, and his self-sacrifice. But he clutched almost fiercely at the thought—even then the petition would reach its destination, the hands of the Governor. Hincks would keep his word.

Within him stirred some strain of the old Covenanter spirit. Men had died before that others might be free. In a flash he saw himself caught up in the cosmic surge of the ages, a negligible particle of life cast aside on the shores of oblivion that the great tide of humanity might sweep on to greater and better things. So might it be that freedom would come to the grant. Then spoke the Calvinistic fatalism that lurks strong in every Scottish soul—perhaps it was to be.

But before him rose the lovely piquant face of Flora McIntyre. He saw her eyes, trustful, and love-illuminated, and her moist red lips as she whispered caressingly:

“My man—my man.”

Within his breast the man’s heart seemed to flutter and sink; the colour fled his cheek.

To yield, to save himself, to live a self-confessed failure in her eyes. To refuse—and death, the final, the absolute, would end forever for her and for him the joyous hope that was lighting his life and hers with a glad radiance. In either case she was lost to him forever.

No way. There seemed no thoroughfare through the dreadful impasse, and yet—yet was he absolutely sure that the Laird could make good his fearful threat. The slight thread of hope that his antagonist might be overestimating his own influence with the powers of life and death was a desperate chance on which to hang a man’s fate. Yet that chance he must take—he *would* take.

His bearded mouth grew tight. Almost hopeless as it seemed, it was the only way. He would accept the gauge that fate had cast before him. He would not yield.

Turning from the window, he faced the Chief.

“Do your worst, Laird of McNab. I will not give you the petition.”

To his feet sprang the Chief, his face twisted as if in pain.

"Ye wull no give it up?" he exclaimed. "Ye'll die first, man,—man," he pleaded. "Dinna be a fool. My God, Craig——!"

He stopped suddenly, for in the young man's face he saw that which told him there was no hope of attaining his purpose. Again he strode up and down the room, his fists clenched, his face twitching.

"Lad—lad," he faltered, "I be sorry—unco' sorry for ye."

As they re-entered the court room, the young officer hurried to Craig's side, his genial face filled with anxiety.

"I have been looking over the papers in the case, and if they can prove what they allege, there is but slight hope."

"And the penalty?"

"Death."

"The Court will come to order," called the Provost Marshal.

The Chief advanced towards the dais. For a moment he glanced at Craig, almost wistfully. The surveyor, watching him, waiting for the words that might mean his blotting out from the world of men, noted curiously that the Laird's face seemed strangely aged, drawn and tired, as if with some inward struggle.

"May it please the Court." The McNab's words came slowly and hesitatingly, utterly unlike his usual bluff self-confident manner. "I find that there is some reason for doubt—much reason in fact. Would it be too much to ax that—that the accused be held indefinitely as a suspicious person—till more evidence can be obtained? I would ax it as a personal favour."

The Provost Marshal glanced at the Laird, then at Craig. There was something here that he did not comprehend, nor did he care to.

"This court," he said, after a pause, "will be always ready to grant any reasonable request of so loyal and distinguished a citizen as the Laird of McNab. The prisoner will be

held without the privilege of communication until further orders."

As Barclay Craig was led down the long corridor he did not see the Chief standing at the court-room door, staring after him. The McNab's head was bent; his lips trembling, as he muttered:

"I'm getting auld—gettin' auld, and soft-hearted. But I couldna do it—I couldna send the brave laddie to his death."

Behind Barclay Craig the cell door jarred shut. A rattle of keys, the click of the great lock, the retreating footsteps of the turnkey, then silence.

He stood staring at the interior of the cell, the little cot set against the wall, the rude wooden table, with its tin plate and cup, the whole dimly lighted by the square of the barred window.

Over him flooded an overwhelming tide of despair. He believed that his trial had been postponed for only one purpose—that he had been imprisoned as a political suspect for an indefinite period, that the Laird might have an opportunity to summon an array of evidence that would assure his conviction. The readiness with which the court had acceded to the Chief's suggestion bore a fateful significance.

Was the McNab right after all? Was it but folly for an individual to set himself against the organized and triumphant influence of the Family Compact? Was he but offering himself and his future on the altar of a hopeless cause?

But in such a thought lay the depths of despair. No—No! Never would he harken to the inward whispers of discouragement. Sooner or later the tide must turn. Martial law, now that Lord Durham was here, could not last forever. Never would he disgrace the clansmen's faith in him by a lack of faith in himself.

Absorbed in thought, he had been but dimly conscious of the sounds floating upward to him through the open win-

dow. A low voice calmly monotonous was repeating the Latin words:

"Subvenite sancti Dei. Occurite angeli Domine.
Suscipientes animum ejus. Oferentes eam in
Conspectu. Libere Domine animum—"

The words were drowned by a resounding clang as of banging doors.

Rushing to the bars he gazed without. Then his figure stiffened, and a groan burst from his lips.

Ten feet from the window stretched a boarded platform on which stood several grave and sternly erect men, among them a black-robed priest, who, missal in hand, was repeating the prayers for the dying.

Below the boarded platform slowly swinging at the ends of ropes were six bound and black-capped figures. So close were they to the window that Barclay Craig could see the futile twitching of their strapped and buckled limbs, and note the heaving agony of their chests. He was an involuntary witness of an execution under martial law.

Filled with a terror such as he had never known, his soul sickening at the horror of the scene, for him prophetic and significant, Barclay Craig staggered from the window and threw himself face downward on the cot.

CHAPTER XIX

WARLOCKS AND BOGLES

"Sing Hey! my braw John Highlandman
Sing Ho! my braw John Highlandman,
There's no a lad in all the land
Was match for my John Highlandman.

Wi' his philibeg and tartan plaid
And good claymore down by his side.
The ladies' hearts he did trepann
My gallant braw John Highlandman."

DUNCAN CAMERON was drunk, recklessly, gloriously, vociferously drunk. Since yesterday morning he had been celebrating in the grog shops of the village the arrival of his semi-annual remittance from home. And now as with tam o' shanter atilt, he kept time to his own singing with his half-filled whiskey glass at the end of his outstretched arm, there was in his glaring eye, and the growing truculence of his manner, indubitable evidence that his intoxication was approaching the quarrelsome stage.

He emptied his glass, set it down, turned his back on the round-faced little German, hooked his elbows on the edge of the bar and again broke forth in song.

"Bonnie Cheerlie's noo awa'
Safe across the friendly main;
Mony's the heert wull br'ak in twa.
Will ye no come back again?"

His audience, a score of stalwart rivermen (MacDonalds from Glengarry on the St. Lawrence), seated by the long table, and lounging by the open hearth, joined eagerly in the chorus of the Jacobite ballad.

"Will ye no come back again?
Will ye no come back again?
Better loved ye canna be,
Will ye no come back again?"

"Noo, who the Deil," demanded Duncan insolently, "asked any o' ye river-hogs for yer mouth-music? Can ye no hold your clavers the whilst a gentleman sings?"

"'Tis well for thee, Duncan Cameron," retorted one of the rivermen, in Gaelic, "that thou art an old man, else such speech would cost thee dear." He was a tall fellow with spiked boots and a gold circlet in one of his ears.

"Tuncan Kameron," put in Hans indignantly, "you stob id. You come in mine plaiz und make a fight und mebbe I lose my license. Stob id, or py Golly, I preaks ein pottle on your head."

"Hoot, mon, hoot," sneered Duncan, turning his red and fiery eye on the proprietor. "Ye would, would ye, ye pot-bellied Hanoverian. Never yet was there one o' your breed could fight a Highlandman." Tauntingly he chanted:

"Noo who the deil hae we got for a king
But a wee bit German lairdie,
And when we gang to bring him home,
He was digging in his own kale yairdie."*

The significance of the song and the studied insolence of his manner were lost on the impassive Teuton, who continued calmly wiping the bar, but the MacDonalds, their recent annoyance forgotten, voiced their amusement in an outburst of laughing applause. The sound seemed to sting the old man to fury. In his intoxication he did not sense that their merriment was sympathetic, not antagonistic.

"Noo, who be ye," he snarled, "to sing o' the Bonnie Prince? 'Twas little enough your feythers did for him at Culloden Moor, where they stood haverin' and bletherin' and chaupin' at the heather wi' their claymores, the whilst the poor lad went down to defeat."

* Cabbage garden.

Recklessly, defiantly, he cast in their teeth that which to a MacDonald of Glengarry is the one unpardonable insult. Hardly had the words left his lips, when they were upon him. Strong hands grasped him, brawny arms lifted him bodily and shot him sprawling out the door.

Shaken and crumpled he lay breathless for a moment. As he staggered to his feet, and rushed towards the door, a firm hand on his collar jerked him back.

"Duncan—Duncan, ye ould disturber av the peace," protested Murty McGonigal. "Do ye think I'm going to let ye go in there agin and have your fool head bate off?"

"I'm as good a man as ever I was," protested Cameron, his eyes aflame with the light of battle. "Come on in wi' me, Murty, and we'll clean out the lot. The two o' us can do it handy."

"Whist, man, whist," jeered Murty, as he gently urged Cameron along. "Ye've done enough grog-swillin'. Ye're coming home with me."

Still protesting his ability to thrash all the MacDonalds that ever came out of Glengarry, the pugnacious old fellow mounted Murty's horse, which the latter led out from the stables back of the Hilyard inn, and the two, McGonigal trudging along on foot, set out along the Flat Rapid Road.

"I've brought Duncan home with me," announced Murty, as an hour later he threw open the door of his cabin.

"The ould fool," he whispered to Narcisse. "He has drunk up all his remittance money and he'd be like enough to lay down by the roadside for the night and have the good people stale away his wits."

Narcisse grinned broadly, as he deftly detached the haunch of venison from the spit and placed it on the table.

"Sit up, Duncan, Mon vieux, and eat wit' us," he invited. "What t'ink you, Duncan, about dose good people, de fairie, dat Murty talk him so much about?"

"Weel," said Duncan, as somewhat unsteadily he took his place at the table. "I'm no sayin' sic folk canna be,

but I'm no believin' it masel. It is bogles and warlocks I be afeered o' mostly."

"And what the divil might them last be?" demanded the Irishman as he filled his plate.

Cameron turned on him a wondering eye.

"Losh, man, ye dinna ken a bogle or a warlock, and I took ye for a fair intelligent man. A bogle is a fearsome thing to see. There used to be one by the Falls o' Linn, and de'il a haporth o' hide had he on him at all. His blood runnin' through his veins was fair visible."

Murty set down his tea-cup and grinned across the table at Narcisse.

"Gwan with ye, Duncan," he jeered. "'Tis Scotch foolishness."

"'Tis not," stoutly maintained Cameron. "And a warlock is an auld de'il o' a he-witch. My great-grandsire once shot one in Strathdon. I've seen signs that would make me believe that MacTavish is a warlock himsal."

"Whist, man, your crazy," retorted McGonigal. "'Tis little any av such gentry care for a bullet."

Narcisse, his eyes dancing, could no longer restrain his risibilities, and gave vent to his feelings in an outburst of coughing.

"By Garrah," remarked Murty, as he gazed thoughtfully through the open door into the soft April evening. "There goes Allan Dhu riding up the road toward the Rapids. What's he up to now, I dunno. There's wan lad that is blue-mouldin' for the want av a batin'."

"But 'twas a bullet o' siller," resumed Cameron, "an unco' large hare had been eatin' the auld man's kale, and the shots wud no kill him. And when they set out the dogs after shooting him with a bullet o' siller, they took the men straight to the auld man's house where they found him wi' a bullet hole in his thigh. 'Tis truth I'm tellin' ye," he added emphatically, as he met Murty's incredulous stare.

"But for fairies," he went on. "Weel, there be they in Scotland who speak o' the green people, others o' the 'daoine shi,' the men o' peace, but I hae my doubts. If

any sic there be, they are but imps o' the Foul Fiend himsal, and I want naught to do wi' them."

"Hould your whist, Duncan Cameron," commanded Murty. "'Tis good-natured folk they are if they take a notion to ye. Many's the poor lad in Ireland they've helped to a pot av gould."

Narcisse, rattling his dishes at the other end of the room, laughed outright.

"Listen to that Frinchman, would ye," was McGonigal's sarcastic comment. "'Tis wise he thinks he is. Duncan, in me grandfather's toime," he went on, more gravely, "there was a bye called Jack Madden, av the Parish av Rosses, a-strollin' home wan night, when unbeknownst to himself he went to sleep be a fairy fort. He was waked up be hearin' the patter av the feet av the fairies' horses. He set up, but divil a wan could he see at all, at all. But, begarrah, he heard them singing all about him, 'Da Mort, Da Luan, Da Mort, Da Luan.'*

"He was a bould lad and a good singer, and sure he thought, if two days were good, three days would be better, and he bawls out:

"'Augus da Dardeen.' †

"And then he saw thim—dozens av thim—and they came crowdin' around him, so plazed with his addition to their singing that they give him a bag av gould. Shure, I got the tale from a grandson av Jack Madden, and I saw the ould codger onct mesilf when I was a little shaver."

Cameron, his hands on his knees, sat staring at the Irishman thoughtfully. Though skeptical in regard to fairies, like many others in the grant, he had brought with him his own pet superstitions. Kelpies, water sprites, he had heard of, while the black dwarf of Tay and the friendly brownie of the Gordon family were fixtures in his mind. To his belief in bogles and warlocks he had already testified.

* Monday—Tuesday.

† Also Wednesday.

The grant itself was none too new to be without its own local superstitions. There were the bewitched ones like poor Maggie McIntosh and Amelia Graham. The Dark Lady, the spectre of the McNabs, both McCuan and Mc-Nee, the piper, claimed to have seen. He himself had once caught a glimpse of the queer lights moving among the graves at Inch Bhui—phosphorus or gas, the surveyor had called them. And Cameron suspected that MacTavish was in league with the Evil One. He had much regard for McGonigal's opinion, and it was evident that he was somewhat impressed by the narrative of Jack Madden's good-fortune.

"Weel," he assented, as he drew a chair up to the hearth and busied himself filling his pipe, "there be what the shepherds call fairy rings in Strathdon."

"They're everywhere," maintained Murty. "There's wan here in the grant—that round hillock be McIntyre's house. The levellin' av the road cut aff part av it, and, between you and me and the wall, it's mesilf that's thinkin' it's maybe that same roadmakin' that brought all the harrud luck on the McIntyres."

"Murty, ma fren," suggested Narcisse, over his shoulder, "you sing purty well. Better go dere and sing dem a song some time. 'Twud be nice to have a bag of gold."

"That I will not," returned McGonigal. "There's many a worse smith than mesilf been stole away to make shoes for the fairy steeds."

Cameron had been staring silently into the fire. The hearty meal had brought to him some measure of sobriety, and his hand in his pocket was fingering regretfully his last remaining shilling. Turning his slow eye on Murty, as if to detect some lurking sign of insincerity, he asked:

"And ye are sure 'tis a fairy fort—the mound by John Mohr's?"

"Divil a doubt av it. Barrin' the hawthorns, 'tis the dead spit av the wans in the ould counthry." There was no touch of deception in the Irishman's steady tone.

"I shouldn't wonder," he went on, "if most any night ye

could hear them singing there 'Da Mort—Da Luan' as they always do when they are in good-humour. But it's not mesilf that wants to hear it."

Duncan sat clasping and unclasping his hands nervously over the head of his cane. His eyes, lit by the firelight, were bright with a bold and venturesome thought. His quick glance out the open door told him that the gloom of dusk had already fallen over the land.

"Weel, I must be gangin'," he said, as he rose to his feet. And, in spite of their protests and urgent invitation to spend the night with them, he insisted on taking his leave.

Through the moonlit night an uncertain figure lurched along the Flat Rapids road. It stepped high over imaginary obstacles and stumbled on trivial ones, but it pushed on with evident purpose, fixed and unalterable.

For, though Duncan Cameron had treated lightly the tale of the fairies' kindness to Jack Madden, the earnestness of the Galway smith, and the lingering influence of the grog, had keyed his brain to crafty planning. He was on his way to the fairy fort where, if luck was with him, he might join in the magic chorus and receive a golden reward from some roving elfin band.

Muttering the mystic words, "Da Mort, Da Luan, Augus da Dardeen," the better to fix them in his memory, he plodded on to the cross-roads. There it stood, a rounded heap of sod-covered earth, almost beneath the window of the McIntyre home. Slyly he stole to its opposite side, in order to avoid the observation of a chance passer-by or the inmates of the household.

Tired and still somewhat grog-befuddled, he sat down on the sloping bank, with a weary sigh. It was scarce time yet to catch the good people at their frolics, so he drew forth pipe and tinder box to enjoy a solitary smoke while he waited.

Leaning back, he heaved a sigh of quiet contentment. Slowly his shaggy bonneted head drooped; the pipe slipped from his relaxed fingers. Peace came to his troubled old

soul and his sorrows evaporated into nothingness as sleep closed the bleared old eyes and smoothed the lines from the haggard face.

Duncan Cameron lay a-slumber, the fairies and their gold forgotten.

CHAPTER XX

HEIGHTS AND DEPTHS

AS the result of a stormy interview with his father, in which the Chief had threatened to disown and disinherit him, for two months no drop of liquor had passed the lips of Allan Dhu McNab. Many of the clansmen were commenting on his altered demeanour, and he had established with his father terms of friendliness, which had inspired MacTavish to the pessimistic prediction that the calm in the young man's life boded but another and more terrific outburst.

But to-day the son of the Chief was a well-groomed and prepossessing figure as his steed strode in conscious dignity along the Flat Rapids road. This evening he bore a marked resemblance to the Laird in one of the latter's benevolent moods. The good blood of a noble line was coursing fast and free through his veins. His scowl was gone. Clear-minded, keen-nerved and optimistic, he seemed to have shaken off the clutches of his darker self. Courteously he touched his hat in recognition of the greeting of a clansman and his good wife—a proceeding so unwonted that they turned in their seats and stared wonderingly after him. It was an incident worth repeating in a day's gossip.

His months of sobriety had softened the harsher lines of his drink-marred countenance, had steadied his hand and cleared his brain. Regretfully now he recalled the incidents of the interview at the home of the McIntyres, the Laird's proud patronising manner and final irascible outburst. On that occasion something in the demeanour of Flora McIntyre had burned into his consciousness the fact

that, though she was the daughter of a backwoods pioneer, she was yet a woman equally removed from either the butterfly creatures of his own social world or the uncouth lasses of the grant. She was not to be won by threats or force, and only the man whose personality could gain her regard might hope to win her heart and hand.

Now that the estrangement between the Chief and his clansmen, as emphasised in the conflict with John Mohr McIntyre, stood between Allan Dhu and the attainment of his heart's desire, it had suddenly become for him a matter where his selfish interests lay in the direction of peace. For two months John Mohr had been in Perth jail; Peter McIntyre was a much wanted fugitive from justice, yet the son of the Laird was no nearer the gaining of his end. Coercion and intimidation had failed of their purpose. It remained to be seen if milder measures would avail.

Varied experience during his social life in Montreal had made the man fully conscious of his own power over women. Few among the city's giddy throng could cast the languishing eye or frame the flattering phrase with defter skill than the son of the Chief, when he so willed, and this evening he was riding, a more thoughtful and more humble, if not a better man than he had been for months, to lay siege to the heart of Flora McIntyre by means of the gentler arts of which he was master when he would. He was riding as a gentleman rides to win, if he may, the hand of his lady-love.

With some trepidation he knocked softly at the door of the McIntyre household, for the splinters of light that framed the drawn blinds told him that such of the inmates that remained at home had not yet retired.

At the sound Flora McIntyre, seated at the spinning wheel, raised her head enquiringly. Half expecting Narcisse or Murty with a haunch of venison, she laid down her work and hurried to the door. At the sight of Allan Dhu's richly garbed figure, unannounced and unattended, the girl whitened to the lips. But fear flowed not in the

McIntyre blood and she lifted her head proudly as she met his gaze.

"I come as a friend, if I may?" he said, so quietly that she was disarmed.

He was dressed in the height of fashion—a frock coat of blue broadcloth, with narrow wasp-like waist, wide flaring skirts and heavy, rolling, velvet collar. His Hessian riding boots were bright and shining, and the kerchief about his high stock, full and flowing. Even at his worst Allan Dhu McNab was a man good to look upon, and to-night, as he stood revealed in the narrow shaft of light from the half-opened door, there was about him the air of a cavalier without evil suggestion. And she was a woman, with a woman's curiosity and a woman's vanity. The courtesy almost verging on humility in his manner as he stood, his bell-crowned beaver hat in his hand, awaiting her word of admittance, impressed her.

The cheering thought came to her that possibly he was an emissary of his father on a mission of reconciliation. Some rumours of the young man's recent reformation had reached her ears, so suppressing her long-slumbering resentment, she determined to meet him half-way.

"You honour our poor home," she said quietly, but with no trace of irony, as she swung wide the door and, without offering her hand, motioned him to a seat. She had been spinning and the balls of yarn and heaps of wool lay on the table where she had dropped them.

Her seriousness of expression, so at variance with her customary gaiety, heightened the dignity that clothed her like a mantle, as she looked him fairly in the eyes, his equal in quality, his superior in equanimity—she wanted him to see that.

"Miss McIntyre, this—this has been a sad affair," he began, rather lamely.

"We, feyther and I," he stammered on, "hae been neither as wise nor as just as we might hae been. Feyther's conduct beneath your roof was—unworthy o' a McNab—a sad

blunder. Feyther's ways are the ways o' the past, I—I——"

He stopped, confused by her calmness. Though well aware by now that the daughter of John McIntyre was no woodland lassie, yet he had expected to find a simpler creature than this self-possessed young woman, and her perfect composure daunted him. Waiting, attentive, she sat, her rich, heavily fringed eyes full upon him. The flaring embers in the hearth and the mellow candle light outlined her clear-cut profile and shimmered on her coils of lustrous black hair.

"Your father sent you?" she queried, with significant directness.

"No—no," he admitted regretfully. Then after a pause he blurted out:

"My own thoughts sent me—my love for ye drove me here."

Her eyes were suddenly aflame, but her voice was firm:

"Then, Allan McNab, unless you come with a message of peace from the man who has robbed us and imprisoned my father, speak not his hateful name in my hearing, lest I forget the better part of courtesy and insult you beneath our roof."

She bit her quivering lip and turned her head away. The man was startled by her show of latent force, and realised that, dangerously near to a dynamic outburst, she had controlled herself.

"We be a sorry family, Mademoiselle McIntyre," he said, dropping into the aristocratic custom of Montreal. "Mine was a sad upbringing. I never kent a mother's care; I never suffered a curbed desire. Adown the torrid, dissolute years of youth, to a lonely unloved boyhood, I can look back only on memories hard and grim. Wild savage blood, untrained, untamed, as in the days o' my bandit ancestors, ruled me. Tenderness and sentiment hae had no part in my life—until now," he mused, talking as a man might to himself, and she felt herself moved in pity.

"I have no graces," he went on, "but those an insincere

city's social education has given me. It groomed, but didna tame the wild lad from the Highland moors, but since I hae learned to love ye and ken ye as ye are, I hae been sore beset by vain and useless regrets for—for what might hae been."

He stopped, his lips atremble. There was now no dissimulation in the man's words. The unexpressed, half-formed thoughts of the last few weeks had rushed in a torrent to his lips.

Flora McIntyre listened and thrilled with girlish pride that some charm of hers had wrung from that iron soul, that untamed heart, such words of penitence. Above her sorrows and her heart-burnings, the thoughts of her imprisoned father, her ailing mother, and her fugitive brother, her soul soared out and glowed with triumph. She had won a silent victory, had broken a vandal will by some subtle strength of her own.

"And now may I do that which I came to do?" he said. "Ax your forgiveness for the terrible affront o' our first meeting?"

Generously, impulsively, she held out her hand: "Forgotten, never to be mentioned by me again."

Allan, still clasping her hand, stood looking at her, his soul in his eyes. Suddenly his virile face became aglow with force and purpose. His love for the woman before him rose up strong within him, sweeping away all thoughts of chiefly prerogatives and landed rights. Carried away by the unspoken sympathy in her eyes and his new-born hopes, rashly, impetuously, he spoke:

"I may soon take a hand in the affairs o' the grant. Feyther is ageing, and once I hae established masel in his confidence, he may journey on the continent, perhaps leaving to masel the affairs o' the grant. I'll make short work o' these miserable squabbles. We must work together, Chief and clansmen, as partners. The bonds o' the auld days are passing, but feyther does not realise it at all. I would I had, for your sake, the power to wipe out all

auld scores and begin anew. And I will hae the power to do it some day—perhaps soon.”

She was listening with mingled interest and amazement, but it was eloquent of the new relations between them that she had not, in spite of her fiery prohibition of a few moments ago, taken any notice of his mention of the McNab.

“I had intended,” he continued, still holding her hand, “to defer to some future time what I be now about to say. But your generous treatment has made me bold. When once afore I sought your hand, your feyther axed a year’s consideration. If I can obtain his release, wull ye renew that offer? Only say that I may wait and hope a year. That wull hearten me in my endeavour.”

“Please—please,” she protested, with paling face, as she gently disengaged her hand, “do not ask that—it can never be.”

“Never,” he repeated dully.

“The past, as far as you are concerned,” she sighed, “is forgotten, but I would not cheat you with one false hope, one misleading word, even to gain my father’s freedom. I can never be mistress of Kennell Lodge. It can never be, Allan McNab. What you ask is impossible.”

“Never—impossible!” he echoed in pathetic dejection.

“Please say no more,” she begged. “To-night you seemed so—so noble—and now I must anger—perhaps hurt you.”

He raised his head proudly erect.

“The hearts o’ the McNabs are strong,” he said, with no air of bravado, but the hurt look on his dark, foreign-looking eyes belied his brave words. “None o’ the name ever kenned fear o’ wounds and I—I can bear the deadlier hurt o’ a woman’s word.”

He raised her fingers to his lips, then stood for a moment, her hand in his. His lips were trembling, his voice when he spoke again was hoarse with emotion.

“I wull strive wi’ the Laird for your feyther’s release,” he said quietly, “and ne’er ag’in wull I do aught against ye or yours.”

He released her hand and without farewell word turned and strode out the door. Through the open doorway she watched him mount. With sympathy and interest her eyes followed him as he galloped off in the moonlight.

Still much moved and marvelling at the metamorphosis, her wandering eye noted that he had forgotten his gloves. As she picked them up she started. Beneath lay a buckskin pouch. It was heavy with coin.

In a flash mortification darkened her face. Her compassion for the man vanished. All heroic conceptions of Allan Dhu were swept away by the rising tide of indignation. The Laird's gold—a bribe of the oppressor.—The damning fact seemed to scream at her, that after all, in his eyes, she was but something to be purchased. Tears of rage overflowed and splashed on her hands. Oh! the shame of it. Why had he done it?

Snatching the hated thing from the table with an impetuosity worthy of Peter, she sent it flying through the open window far into the night. As she stood alone, her hands clenched, her cheeks wet, her bosom heaving, the darkness without was cleft by a single shout. Then silence.

Stepping to the door, she peered uneasily into the moonlight. No one was in sight, but her waiting ear caught the slow shuffle of footsteps close at hand. It was some noisy reveller on his way home from the village, she concluded, as she dropped the bar.

A great golden moon sailed high above the Laurentide crest, and sent shafts of white light searching among the silent pine trunks, dripping the home of Flora McIntyre in silver and framing the recumbent form of Duncan Cameron in regal radiance.

Through the depths of his slumber crashed the clatter of hoofs, as Allan Dhu whirled about the cross-roads. Then a stinging blow on the cheek shocked the old man to wakefulness.

He sprang to his feet and clutched his stick. Were the

“good people” chastising him for his intrusion. Quivering with excitement he listened. Like the echo of a dream from further down the road came again the reverberation of hoofs. To his still half-somnolent brain they seemed to sing:

“Da Mort—Da Luan, Da Mort—Da Luan.”

“August da Dardeen,” he chanted, in quick response.

Then all was silence. The McIntyre home loomed up beside him, its moonlit panes staring spectrally. Before him stretched the white ribbon of the roadway, between its canyon-like walls of inky pines. With a sigh he concluded he had been dreaming. He would find his pipe and go home.

As he fumbled in the dry grass at his feet, something glittered near his moving fingers. He picked it up. It was a sovereign. A few feet away he found a couple of guineas.

“The fairies’ gold—the fairies’ gold,” he murmured in awe-struck tones.

He was about to be content with his findings when a pouch-shaped object caught his eye. It was a large round purse bulging with coin.

“My God!” he gasped, as he hefted it. “There’s fifty pound if there’s a farthing.” Then he deliberately kicked himself on the heel to see if he were truly awake.

“Murty McGonigal,” he soliloquised, “’tis a wise man ye are—and a damn fool at the same time. Auld Duncan Cameron’s got more brains and more courage than ye, for all his grog-swillin’.”

Holding tight to his treasure, lest it disappear with the first rays of morning light, he set out a brisk walk for his cabin by the Dochart.

Plying whip and spur, on through the night rode Allan McNab. Vanished into thin air was his mood of gentleness. One thought only had him in its relentless grip. Keener than his despair at Flora McIntyre’s refusal was the insistent gnawing tooth of his old familiar craving. Every nerve, every muscle, every molecule of his body screamed

aloud for its accustomed and long-deferred stimulant. There at least was solace, the only solace he had ever known.

Reining his steed at the grog-shop of Hans the Dutchman, he dismounted and rushed within. With shaking hand he filled his glass to the brim with the raw, fiery liquor of the backwoods and tossed it off. Another and still another. Casting a gold piece on the bar, and ignoring the staring German and silent loungers, he pocketed a flask and, remounting his horse, dashed away with a wild whoop of exultation.

On with clatter of hoofs, through the sleeping log-built village, on along the crest of the rise above the Deer Park, he galloped till his startled and breathless steed came to a walk half a mile beyond the nearest house. He drew the flask from his pocket and held it tilted to his lips in a long, satisfying gurgle.

Across the moonlit road ahead of him plodded a female figure, young, lithe, and erect even under its burden of willow baskets, suspended on her back by a strap across her brow. It was an Indian girl who had been merchandising her wares among the homes of the settlers, now on her belated homeward way to Big Thunder's village across the lake.

The man walked his horse closer and gazed down appraisingly into the woman's uplifted, terror-filled eyes. Then with a murmur of affright she sprang forward like a deer and disappeared in the darkness of the pines.

Motionless, Allan Dhu McNab stared at the spot where she had vanished. His face was red and flushed. His fine dark eyes became fierce and protuberant with alcoholic excitement. Within him all the foul fiends of Hell, stirred to strength by his sudden and copious potations and the sight of the helpless woman, were waging battle with the powers of grace for the possession of the man's soul.

Like a pistol shot his palm fell on his thigh and he laughed aloud—a laugh menacing, triumphant, lustful. In

a twinkling he had dismounted, tied his horse to a tree and plunged into the darkness of the Deer Park.

A few hundred yards and he caught sight of her steadily plodding on towards the lake whose silvery surface now shimmered between the tree-trunks. As the sound of his footsteps reached her ears, the girl cast one fearful glance over her shoulder and, dropping her burden, darted towards a denser smudge of shrubbery.

His brain rum-crazed, every spirit-soaked nerve fired with his fell purpose, the man covered the ground between them in long beast-like leaps and caught her by the arm.

A scuffle, a few gasping, protesting words, then a smothered scream in the darkness of the bushes. Over the face of the radiant, full-orbed moon drifted a heavy cloud. The silent blackness of the forest threw its pitying mantle over the nameless horror of the night.

CHAPTER XXI

"FAIRIES' GOLD"

MARCH, with blustering winds and swirling snows, had come and gone, and now April's softer mood wept over wood and lea.

Beneath the warming downpour the straggling roadways of the grant were changing from pathways of purest white to patches of brown and shining pools of water. In the clearings, dark streaks of earth broke through winter's coverlet of snow, but in the protected recesses of the woods it lay deep and unmelting.

During the long hours of the night Flora McIntyre had lain awake, staring into the darkness, her ears filled with that most melancholy of sounds, the ceaseless patter of the rain on the roof. The girl's mind was aggrapple with the daily increasing difficulties confronting her. Just at present she was face to face, for the first time in her life, with life's most prosaic need, a lack of money.

Since the incarceration of her father and the flight of Peter, she had taken charge of the family fortunes. Fortunate it had been for her that John McIntyre had thrashed his oats and disposed of his grain early the preceding fall, some days before the seizure of the cattle. It had brought, to be sure, no great amount of ready cash for a family of four, for the preceding drouthy summer following a cold, wet spring had yielded but a scanty crop. Yet under ordinary circumstances it would have been sufficient to carry them through the winter.

But they were no ordinary circumstances with which the daughter of John Mohr McIntyre was now battling. Encouraged by the legal victory of McNaughten, she had engaged the services of a Perth lawyer, and the weighty

fee he had exacted yielded in return only a wordy opinion that the Laird seemed well within his legal rights.

Though deprived of their horses and oxen, Flora had decided that at all events the spring ploughing must be done, and the necessary cash outlay for the hiring of men and oxen had further depleted her dwindling fund. The prolonged illness of Mrs. McIntyre had necessitated two costly visits from a Perth doctor. Yesterday, on the presentation of his bill, the proud girl had paid it without question, leaving in her possession only a few shillings.

Had it not been for the store of potatoes in the cellar, their small but industrious flock of poultry, and the single cow bought in at the sheriff’s sale of McIntyre’s cattle by Murty McGonigal and secretly transferred to its old stable, their plight would have been dire indeed.

And through the gloomy fabric of her anxieties ran a still darker thread of doubt and apprehension concerning Barclay Craig. Nearly three months had passed and from him had come neither word nor line to tell of either success or failure. Many of the clansmen had lost faith in the man, and more than one credited the rumour that he had been bribed to silence by the Laird or Allan Dhu, an utterance which on one occasion had cost the prognosticator a battered face, administered by the fists of Murty McGonigal.

But her worry over her almost exhausted finances, her anxiety about her mother, her doubts regarding Barclay Craig, and her constant thought of her father and brother were overshadowed by a more immediate and pressing demand. But yesterday she had received by mail a notice from MacTavish that the quarter’s rent was now overdue and that he would call on the morrow for its collection.

From MacTavish, she feared, no mercy could be expected. To ask a loan of any of her neighbours, as poor as herself, was impossible. Even the few who were able, she knew full well, would hesitate before incurring the Laird’s anger by such a step. Of Murty McGonigal alone could she have borrowed sufficient to meet the demand, but

her pride forbade. She was still owing him the money advanced for the redemption of the cow.

It was nearing noon when MacTavish, wrapped in his heavy plaid, appeared at the door. As he took a seat and dropped the green bag to the floor, his thin old lips twisted into an upward tilted line that was meant for a cordial smile.

"How's all wi' ye, Mees Flora? Ye be hae'in your rent all ready the day?" he queried, as he drew a note book from his bag.

"I'm afraid I must disappoint you, Mr. MacTavish," she replied, with enforced ease. "Speak low, I beg of you. I do not wish Mother to hear. I will have to ask you for more time."

"Na, na, lassie, I canna grant it. Ye hae had ten days o'er the time. 'Tis more than the law allows."

"But, Mr. MacTavish——" She was biting her lips in an effort to control her indignation. Cost what it might in mental anguish and smothered pride, this merciless old man must be placated in some way.

"Na, Lassie, I canna," the chancellor repeated. "Noo, had I my way, I would readily forgive ye the rent on account o' your other misfortunes.

"My heert bleeds for ye, lassie," he went on hypocritically. "But 'tis one o' the mysterious dispensations o' Providence that the innocent must aye suffer wi' the guilty. But siller is siller, lass, and the Laird's orders be orders, and no man ever yet could say o' Alexander MacTavish that he was no faithful to his salt."

The girl sat silent. Her fingers hidden under the table were interlocked in an agony of apprehension. To-morrow perhaps she and her mother would be without a roof over their heads, the object of their neighbours' charity.

"Weel—weel," he said, as he rolled one hand over the other in a washing motion, "if ye no hae the siller, lass, I must be takin' a look about the byre,* to see what ye hae there—siller or corn, ye ken."

* Stable.

He rose to his feet. Flora’s face blanched with a new fear. If he entered the stable, he would discover the presence of the cow. At all hazards, this must be averted. A thousand futile plans flashed through her mind. Would it be possible to occupy the old man’s attention in some way while she slipped out and led the animal to some hidden spot by the river brink?

“Wait, Mr. MacTavish. The granary door is locked,” she hazarded.

“Eh!” The old man peered up at her suspiciously. “Weel, weel, get me the key.”

With face composed, but trembling in every limb, the girl stepped into the next room. For a moment she stood, her forehead against the wall in an attitude of wordless misery, longing, hoping, praying for some gleam of inspiration that would point a way out of the perplexity.

“Come, lass,” the chancellor exclaimed impatiently, “I canna wait longer.”

“I can’t—find—the key,” she faltered, as she re-entered the room. “Can you not come to-morrow? I may find it by then.”

MacTavish, from under his shaggy brows, peered sharply at her. Her pallid face and embarrassed manner told him only too plainly that she was prevaricating.

“I be an auld mon, lassie, but no so auld that ye can make sport o’ me,” he said, in a changed and rasping tone. “I give ye till the morrow to hae the money or the corn, and if ye no hae it then, out ye gang. And noo I’ll take a look about the byre——”

“The De’il ye wull!”

Duncan Cameron stood in the open doorway. His piercing grey eye, from under his drooping Balmoral bonnet, was regarding the chancellor truculently.

“What do ye here, ye auld son o’ Belial?” he cried. “Hae ye no wrought enough harm to the McIntyres, wi’out coming to gloat o’er your work? When I saw ye skelpin’ up the road, I thought ye were coming here to worrit the lassie.”

"I came in my official capacity to collect the quarter's rent. It has no been paid," said MacTavish pompously, as he wiped his glasses.

"An' ye couldna take 'No' for an answer, and gang about your business. Ye stayed here worritin' two helpless females, ye auld limb o' the De'il. Hoo muckle is the rent?"

MacTavish named the sum. Flora McIntyre, amazed beyond speech, saw Duncan draw a handful of gold and silver coins from his pocket, count out the required amount and hand it to her.

"Pay the auld warlock, Miss Flora," he commanded.

"Noo," he thundered, turning to the Chancellor, "write the lassie a receipt and take yoursal' off."

"I'll no be hastened in the performance o' my official duty by any word from a vagabond like yersal, Duncan Cameron," sneered MacTavish, as with the utmost deliberation he took a seat at the table and with tantalising slowness proceeded to write out a receipt.

Cameron, his fists clenched, his eye aglitter, stood watching him.

As MacTavish laid down the pen and rose to his feet, Duncan grasped him by the collar.

"Noo that your official duty is performed," he jeered, as his brawny arm almost lifted the shrinking form of the Chancellor from his feet, "it become both a pleasure and a duty for masel"—a vigorous shake set MacTavish's teeth chattering—"in my private and unofficial capacity as a Scottish gentleman"—another shake—"to add a wee bit to your pace."

With that he shot the Chancellor out the door, and an instant later sent his green bag flying after him.

"I wull hae the law on ye for this, Duncan Cameron," spluttered MacTavish, as he gathered himself up.

"Hoot, mon, hoot!" jeered Duncan from the doorway. "All the law ye ever had in your noodle would no wad a crack."

"Oh, Duncan, Duncan!" exclaimed the astonished girl,

as she gazed at the receipt in her hand. “How can you afford this? I fear you have done yourself wrong.”

“Tuts, lassie,” he protested. “Dinna fash your head about me. Did ye hear about Peter?” he asked, as if anxious to change the subject.

“Peter,” she exclaimed fearfully, “they haven’t caught him?”

“Hoot, lassie, there wull be two moons in the sky when they get him. Take him to your mother. ’Tis good news I hae for her.”

“Mistress McIntyre,” Duncan said, as he took a seat by her bedside, “I hae word o’ Peter.” It was evident that the old man was bubbling over with information that afforded him both pleasure and amusement.

“I saw it all masel,” he began. “Peter had been gangin through the woods to Amelia’s and Madigan’s posse caught sight o’ him. At that he ran loupin’ down the road afore they could turn the corner to Amelia’s house. As he came runnin’ up, Minister Freer was aside his horse by Amelia’s gate. The lad was fair spent.

“‘Get in the house,’ sez the minister. ‘I’ll turn them off.’

“‘Sez Madigan when he came up: ‘Did ye see any one pass this way?’”

“Duncan! Duncan!” exclaimed Mrs. McIntyre breathlessly, from the pillows. “Dinna tell me the minister’s lied?”

To her sternly righteous Scottish soul the possibility of the Reverend Freer uttering a falsehood even for the protection of her fugitive son was simply unbelievable.

Duncan licked his lips as if in actual physical enjoyment of the situation. His face was radiant with pleasurable anticipation, and with true Scottish deliberation he was in no hurry to announce the dénouement of the tale.

“Na, na, Mistress McIntyre,” he said placidly, as he sipped the tea Flora had brought him.

“Says the minister to them: ‘I hae been here a half-hour and no livin’ soul has passed down the road.’”

Mrs. McIntyre and Flora gazed at him, the mother troubled, the girl smiling.

"Oh, good, good for Mr. Freer!" she ejaculated.

"I came out from the bushes and says I to the minister, hopin' to hae a wee bit theological crack wi' him:

"'Ye lied, minister, ye lied.'

"And says he: 'I didna lie, Duncan Cameron. They spiered o' me, if I had seen any one gangin down the road and I said that I had no seen a livin' soul. 'Twas no a lie, Duncan. The lad didna gang down the road—he stoppit in the house.'

"'Be it a lie or no, Minister Freer,' says I to him, 'tis sic-like that wull give ye a crown o' righteousness in the Lord's kingdom.'

"Noo, Lassie," said Duncan, as he rose to go, "ye must take this. 'Twill buy a bit medicine and tasties for your mother." And he handed the astonished girl four clinking English guineas.

Cameron had guarded his secret with true Scottish canininess. Though for days he had been lavish in his entertainment of Murty and Narcisse, and though McGonigal's suspicions had been aroused, not even the Irishman's deft questioning could wring from him the truth.

"'Tis the last o' a bit o' an estate," he had told them. "It has been years in Chancery Court and the Bytown post brought a few days syne the last farthing from my family barrister."

"Oh, Duncan, Duncan!" Flora exclaimed, with tears in her eyes. "How can I ever repay you?"

"Tuts! tuts! lassie. It's no repaying me ye'll be at all. In Braemar yer feyther once made me a loan some twenty years syne. Noo would John Mohr be dunning me for it? Na, na, he would na. His good day was just as hearty, his hand-clasp just as warm as if there was no debt at all atween us." And he concluded by relating the equally imaginative story about "a bit o' an estate" and the Chancery Court's delay.

"God knows," cried the girl, as she kissed his grizzled

cheek, “it comes in good season. But for you he would have set us on the roadside. Why—why, it comes like fairy gold.”

Cameron’s eyes under the droop of his Balmoral bonnet twinkled a little.

“’Tis many’s the true word, lass, is said in a joke,” he said gravely as, taking his stick, he trudged on down the road.

CHAPTER XXII

AT THE FOOT OF THE THRONE

BARCLAY CRAIG awoke, cast off the covering and sprang to his feet. The prison cell was still grey with the obscurity of early dawn. He threw the window open to its full width and the narrow chamber flushed to overflowing with the keen, cool air of the spring morning.

One by one he cast his garments from him till he stood in the slanting streak of light from the narrow window as naked as a Greek god. Above his head in rhythmic motions swung his well-muscled arms. Then he bent forward repeatedly touching the floor with his finger tips. One fist shot out, then another; he circled, feinted, and side-stepped about an imaginary opponent, now retreating before him, now driving him into the far corner of the cell. For a half hour the round of vigorous exercises continued till every sinew had been strained and tested, every nerve enlivened. Then with a folded blanket from his cot he scoured the surface of his body till it glowed with ruddy life renewed.

Not altogether imaginary was the foe with whom Barclay Craig fought every morning in the grey silence of his cell. Four months of dreary monotony, of uneventful sameness—no sound save the echoing foot-falls of the jailers, the rattle of their keys, and the great gong that struck the hours—no face but the surly countenance of the man who twice a day opened the door to pass within a platter of food. Barclay Craig was agrapple with an antagonist as insidious as it was merciless, the physical degeneration and mental inertia that come with prison life. Hardly a week had he been an inmate of his narrow cell when he

had felt its compelling power and glimpsed the yawning gulf of apathy into which he was slowly slipping.

But it was not in the man to yield. With a quick mental jerk he had drawn himself together and sternly resolved that, though girt about by stone walls and iron bars, he would yield no jot or tittle to their benumbing influence. He would keep his body well and fit, and when the time came, if come it did, when once more he could measure strength and wit with the maleficent influences that bid fair to mar his life, they would find him as strong and capable as the day he entered the prison door.

Day by day he strove as well to keep his soul calm and sweet, his brain clear and alert. With a last stray coin he had bribed his attendant to procure for him a liberal supply of stationery. That he had always been an omnivorous reader stood him now in good stead. During the long hours of the day he rewrote from memory song and poems of his boyhood days, and reclothed in written words half-forgotten scenes of dimly remembered romances.

He had kept no count of time, but the greater warmth of the sunshine, the constantly dripping roofs, and the twitter of the birds about his window told that spring was at hand. Ten days ago the snow had vanished from the wide-flung fields beyond the river, and but yesterday he had seen the broken ice-fields of the St. Lawrence, streaked with watery lines of blue, move slowly oceanward.

With a sigh he wondered if another spring would find him still shut off from his fellow-men, or free beneath a friendly sky, or—the darker thought intruded itself, would he, a victim to the vengeance of the Laird, have passed to another phase of being? He shook off his momentary depression and busied himself with the papers on the table.

"Monsieur est servi."

Instead of the grim-faced guard, there stood in the open doorway a genial, grey-haired French Canadian. He bore in his hand Craig's morning meal.

Unconsciously Craig returned the new turnkey's smile.

As he took the platter from him and placed it on the table, he queried:

"You are new here?"

"Yes, Monsieur, since yesterday—dere ees a new warden. I come wit' him."

The far end of the corridor was filled with a sudden outburst of sound. Above the clang of opening doors and the rattle of keys rose cries of glad recognition, the hysterical sobbing of women and the hoarse voices of men.

"What is it?" asked Craig.

"Dey come for deir fren's. De martial law—she's stop."

Craig's heart bounded with hope. Martial law at an end. Lord Durham must have inaugurated a policy of amnesty. He remembered now the sudden cessation of executions a few days after he entered the prison. He would ascertain if the new conditions held any hope of his own release. Hurriedly scribbling a note to Hincks apprising him of his whereabouts, he handed it to the turnkey, who took it with a promise to submit it to the warden of the jail.

Nearing noon the next day the French Canadian appeared, his good-natured face shining.

"You can go now to de court, Monsieur," he announced, as he threw open the door.

A few moments later, in the court room, Craig was shaking the hand of Hincks, who was chattering happily.

"Gad! Craig, glad to see you—couldn't imagine what had happened you.—You're looking fine—trifle pale.—Know this judge—'S' good fellow. Banks, here," he indicated a grey-haired attorney standing near, "has the writ of habeas corpus all ready."

"The prisoner," said the Judge, as he glanced over the document, "has been detained under martial law on the grounds that he was a suspicious character. There being no ground for action on such a charge under the civil law which now prevails, and following the pacific policy desired by the government, he will be admitted to bail. You will go his surety, Mr. Hincks?"

Hincks agreed and busied himself for a moment with signing the necessary papers.

As they passed out the door into the golden brightness of the spring morning, Craig removed his hat and drew a long breath of sheer delight. His whole physical being thrilled a glad welcome to the caressing touch of the wind on his cheek and the arching glory of the blue dome overhead.

"Durham!" exclaimed Hincks, in response to Craig's query. "Oh, you couldn't know of course—Durham's gone—hot-headed, proud fellow—angered about something—went back home—did big things before he went—stopped the executions—declared for a policy of mercy—arranged a legislative union of both provinces—favours more municipal government—sent home a ringing report in favour of reform.

"But cheer up—cheer up," he rattled on as his quick eye noted Craig's expression of dismay. "New man's Lord Sydenham—as good a reformer as Durham—s'in the city now," he concluded, as the two entered the editor's office.

"Let me have my money and my papers," said Craig quietly, without taking a seat.

"All right—all right—here are your funds, and your papers.—Made a copy of the petition—when may I print it?"

"As soon as I have seen the Governor, I will notify you."

"Good!—good!" exclaimed Hincks. Then he continued excitedly: "You'll have to hurry. Sydenham leaves to-day for Quebec as soon——"

The air shook with a piercing whistle from the waterfront.

"There's the *John Bull* blowing now—too late—I'm afraid you can't catch it—if that's the last whistle."

But his last words were addressed to empty air. Craig had darted out the door and was running madly down the street. As he tore on, block after block, pedestrians stopped and stared wonderingly after him. Once, as he whirled

about a corner, he collided with a stout man, and heard a frantic shout of "Stop, thief!" fade away behind him.

Well now for Barclay Craig were the hours of regular systematic exercise he had taken in his prison cell. There was no faltering in his steady pace, no defect in his regular breathing. His whole physical organism was responding nobly to the terrific strain so suddenly placed upon it.

He darted about another corner and the blue water of the St. Lawrence, flecked with fleecy whitecaps, flashed into view. At the end of the long wharf he could see the steamer. Already it was emitting white puffs of steam, and again he heard its siren signal of departure.

Straining every muscle, he raced on over the planking of the pier. Above the hollow echoes beneath his feet he heard behind him a rising tumult of voices and menacing shouts. Curiously he glanced back; a roaring mob, the stout man at its head, was in full pursuit.

On, on he dashed along the pier. On, with thumping heart and heaving breast, past piles of kegs and bales of merchandise. But even now his straining eye riveted on the white bulk of the steamer could note the first slow revolutions of her paddle wheels and the torrent of black smoke pouring from her funnels. Already the wharf hands were casting off the ropes.

The shouting, angry mob behind, the widening, watery lane before—there was no time for thought, no time for hesitation. Without slackening his pace for a single instant, Craig dashed on to the edge of the dock and hurled himself in a mighty leap towards the receding rail of the vessel, fifteen feet away.

For the fleeting fraction of a second, that appeared an eternity, he felt himself flying through the air, and his heart stood still as he seemed to be sinking, falling into the waves that leaped playfully beneath him.

Then his arms tightened with a painful jerk. He had won the steamer's side. Both hands were clutching the rail, his body hanging limp against its perpendicular surface,

his feet almost trailing in the foam-tossed torrent racing from beneath the wheel.

He remained motionless for a moment to recover his breath, then slowly drew himself up, and clambered over the rail. Facing him was a brass-buttoned uniformed man, whose weather-beaten face was darkly ominous.

"No law-breaker can find refuge aboard my craft," he snapped. "You are under arrest."

From the wharf came warning shouts of "Stop, thief!"

"It's a mistake, I'm no thief," panted Craig. "In my rush to the boat I knocked down a man, I——"

"Tut—tut," broke in the Captain. "That's a child's tale. No honest man comes tearing down to a dock with a mob at his heels. Take him away and put him below," he ordered.

"Sir," maintained Craig, "my business is with the Governor. I carry——"

His speech was smothered by an outburst of scornful laughter from the passengers, who, sensing something unusual, had formed a ring about the two men. Among them were army officers, government employees and members of the Governor's staff. That this wild-eyed, hatless man, who had insanely risked his life in a reckless leap to a moving steamboat, should demand an interview with the Governor was ridiculous.

"Huh," snapped the Captain. "But little time has the Governor of the Canadas for the likes of you. John," he ordered, "take him below."

A strong hand seized Craig from behind and jerked him backwards. With a ducking motion of his head and neck, the surveyor twisted himself under the man's arm and broke his hold on his collar. Like a flash his fist shot upwards in a quick jab to the fellow's jaw, almost lifting him from his feet. As the sailor reeled backwards into the crowd a woman's scream cut into the air, and a man's voice warned:

"Beware!—the man is mad!—stand back!—stand back!"

Alarmed, the bystanders retreated, leaving the two fac-

ing one another, the centre of a ring of excited faces. The captain drew a pistol from his clothing and, pointing it directly at Craig, thundered:

"Surrender yourself peaceably or I'll shoot you where you stand!"

A tall, well-dressed man approaching leisurely along the passageway at the side of the steamer, at the sound of the Captain's voice, looked lazily towards the excited group about the open space where stood Craig and the Captain. He leaned languidly against a post and stood regarding the scene with indolent curiosity.

"What has caused this tumult?" he asked, in a voice that, though suave and calm, was haughty and commanding.

As if by magic the hubbub ceased, the crowd parted reluctantly. Detaching himself from the support of the post, the newcomer, swinging a light cane in his gloved fingers, strolled through the lane that had opened before him. His slow gaze took in the burly form and angry face of the Captain, and the figure of Barclay Craig, now standing with both hands high above his head in token of surrender.

"A fleeing vagabond, Your Excellency," the Captain replied deferentially. "He was chased down the street by a mob and jumped aboard just as we were leaving the dock. He shall not be permitted to annoy you."

"A petition—I bear a——"

A dozen arms grasped him; a brawny hand was flapped across his mouth.

"Wait a moment." Lord Sydenham held up his hand. For a space he eyed Craig carefully. "I don't believe this man is dangerous. Let him speak for himself," he suggested.

The deck hands released Craig. Without a word he drew the petition from his pocket and placed it in the Governor's hands. All stood silent as Lord Sydenham glanced over it. His inspection of the document finished, he turned to the Captain and said impressively:

"To petition the throne, Captain, is the inalienable right

of every British subject. You would not deny the man his rights?"

The Captain muttered something about "thief" and "danger to Your Excellency."

"I will examine this person later," continued the Governor, "and if I find any reason to believe him a law-breaker, I will turn him over to you. Colonel Cooper," he said, turning to a member of his staff, "take charge of this document, and have the man brought to my stateroom in half an hour."

Humming a tune, and swinging his cane, Lord Sydenham resumed his stroll, as if the incident was already forgotten.

Barclay Craig, as a half-hour later he was ushered into the stateroom where sat the Governor of the Canadas and the members of his staff, scanned curiously the features of the man in whose hands lay the fate of the settlers of McNab.

He saw a slim, yet athletic-looking Englishman of thirty-five dressed in the height of the prevailing fashion. From a brow broad and smooth, the blond hair, already slightly tinged with grey, fell away in undulating folds. The haughty mouth was framed by a curled and well-groomed moustache, and in the clear grey eyes now regarding Craig appraisingly was an expression of alert intelligence.

The Honourable Poulett Thompson, now Lord Sydenham, was a fair type of the younger sons of aristocratic families whom Britain sends to administer the frontiers of her wide-flung empire. Living personifications are they of the best that birth and breeding, intensified by many generations, can produce. Excoriated by agitators, vilified by the penny press, standing as they and their class undoubtedly do, for a system of social relations that is rapidly passing away before the rising tide of democracy, yet to-day the strength and solidity of the British Empire, and the loyal devotion of the British colonist, are eloquent and ubiquitous testimonials to their ability, and their faithfulness to the ideals of the land that sent them forth.

Only a month ago the Honourable Poulett Thompson, by reason of two unexpected deaths, had fallen heir to an earldom, and assumed the hereditary title of Lord Sydenham.

"Mr. Craig," he began, "I have learned your name from this," he touched the petition lying on the table. "Something of this have I heard before. Among the matters that have come to me from the administration of my predecessor, Lord Durham, is a communication from the Laird of McNab complaining of the lawlessness in his district. It contained a request from the Laird for permission to organise and maintain a permanent armed posse for the maintenance of order. The matter was of too great importance to be passed on at once and was referred to me by the Minister of the Interior."

His voice was slow and languid; it seemed as if he had only a passing interest in the matter. As he spoke his fingers toyed with a bunch of seals hanging from his flowered waistcoat. Behind his chair several members of his staff stood in respectful silence.

Only Craig's Scottish immobility prevented his sudden apprehension manifesting itself in his countenance. The Chief had anticipated him. By means of a cleverly worded request for permission to organise a posse, the Laird had poured into the ear of the Governor the tale of the doings of the Black Boys. There, Craig quickly concluded, danger lay. He would not allow himself to be drawn into a discussion of that phase of the question—a discussion such as the Governor evidently desired and anticipated.

"Your Excellency," he fenced, "has read the petition. I can only state that I know from my own personal knowledge that every statement in it is true."

The Governor took the document from the table. "But, Mr. Craig, the statements herein contained are so impossible, so outrageous—that they are almost past belief. That a representative of an ancient family, the bearer of an honoured name, as is Chief McNab, could be guilty of such acts seems incredible."

"Your Excellency will pardon me," came from Craig firmly, yet respectfully. "You will note that we do not ask you to believe. We only ask you to investigate."

His clear bell-like voice filled the room. His manner was positive, yet deferential. Lord Sydenham's eyes twinkled a little. Suddenly his lackadaisical manner vanished and he sat erect. Taking a monocle from his pocket, he affixed it to his eye and scrutinised the surveyor closely.

"I can hardly imagine you, Mr. Craig, building a log cabin, driving a yoke of oxen, or boiling potash," he said, with a grim smile. "How do you happen to be concerned with the affairs of the Laird of McNab? Are you a politician or a reformer?"

"Neither a politician nor a reformer, Your Excellency," Craig responded, as he returned the other's smile, a smile which seemed to bring the two men closer together. "I am a surveyor and was formerly in the service of the McNab."

Eloquently he told the story; his arrival at the Flat Rapids settlement, the warning signals, the facts he had learned of the Laird's persecution of Miller, McIntyre and McFarlane, the violent arrest and farcical trial of Peter McIntyre, and the Chief's successful attempt to provoke McIntyre to a deed of outlawry by running the road across his land. He kept back nothing save one name, that of Flora McIntyre. He admitted his accidental meeting with the Black Boys and described his final break with the Laird. As he spoke he warmed to his subject. In vivid, telling phrases he described the people of the grant, their industry, their patience, their pride in their Scottish ancestry, and the fading of their devotion to the Chief. As he related the incidents of the mutiny and fight at Sand Point, Lord Sydenham's face brightened with amused interest.

"Gad!" he chuckled, "but that would have been worth seeing." But he added quickly: "It was treason—rank sedition just the same."

"No, no, Your Excellency!" objected Craig. "Read the

petition again. As loyal to the Queen as their ancestors were to the ill-fated Stuarts are these clansmen of McNab. Note what they say, these sturdy fellows from the Highlands."

He took the petition from the table and read: "We, one and all, consider ourselves as loyal subjects of the Queen and are willing to serve Her Majesty in any part of the British North America Your Excellency may see fit to send us, under any other commander than the McNab.

"Judge now, Your Excellency," he continued, "what must have been the conduct of the Chief, since he has sundered in the hearts of his kinsmen the ties of a thousand years, when he has destroyed the love and devotion which the Highlander bears for his Chief—a devotion that has been for ages the theme of the poet and the wonder of the historian."

Craig knew well the standards and ideals of the man before him and how best to touch his sympathy as well as his intellect. Every eye in the room was riveted on the surveyor, and he thrilled at the knowledge that he was now dominating the situation.

Lord Sydenham's gaze, no longer indolent but alive with interest, never wavered from Craig's animated face as he continued:

"They are a simple-minded, old-fashioned, honest, hard-working people, Your Excellency, and as such are bound by many limitations. They know little of the law, save its delays and procrastinations. But, one and all, they have a firm and abiding belief that in the institution of royalty there is something that will intervene to protect them against a tyranny that would hold them bound forever in the chains of the past. They ask only this, that you send a fair-minded man to investigate and report to you. With his findings and your decision they will rest content."

He ceased; for a moment the room was very still. In the brightness of the Governor's eyes shone something like enthusiasm. But his voice was cold and cautious, as he said slowly:

"Yet—yet there is lawlessness. That you do not deny, Mr. Craig. That cannot be tolerated. I will approve of the request of the Laird of McNab for a permanent armed posse, and will so recommend to the Privy Council. Colonel Cooper, make a note of that and call it to my attention when we reach Quebec."

He paused. Craig's face paled. So this was to be the end of all his hopes and efforts. He turned to leave the room.

"A moment, Mr. Craig."

Lord Sydenham had risen to his feet. His eyes were shining and his voice held a ring of exultation.

"Your people have appealed to the Crown to remedy wrongs that cannot be readily reached by the formal process of the law. They are right, Mr. Craig—more right than hair-splitting barristers and conscienceless agitators. They are right—for that has always been, and is now, the great justification for the existence of the institution of royalty. It seems like a page from the past. Such primitive faith—such trusting loyalty shall not be in vain.

"I pledge you my word," he said, as he reached out his hand to Craig, "that, as soon as possible, I will appoint a special commissioner with full power to investigate the management of the McNab grant and report to me concerning the complaints in the petition."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LOVER TRIUMPHANT

SPRING in McNab. Spring where beneath the burgeoning maple boughs the proud purple trilliums nodded a stately greeting to the modest wood violets at the edge of the lingering snowbanks. Spring by the lake, now rolling blue and unfettered to the sea—spring by the winding Madawaska, flowing wide and full with its added burden of vanished winter snows. By the pine-girt home of the McIntyres the nesting robins were calling to their mates in love notes soft and low.

But the glad joyousness of the reawakened world found no echo in the heart of Flora McIntyre, as with reluctant steps and downcast face she wound her way along a woodland path towards Arnprior.

Four months had come and gone and from Barclay Craig had come no tidings. Day after day she had watched and waited in vain. Night after night, in the still darkness that bares to the human soul its innermost things of hope and fear, of love and hate, she had fought against the insistent unyielding thought that the bearded, courteous stranger who had ridden so suddenly into her life, and with strong arm and flashing eye defended her against insult, might be after all but one of those who lightly love and as lightly ride away.

What other explanation could there be of his long silence—a silence all the more inexcusable since he knew that not only she, but the clansmen of the grant were waiting with almost unbearable anxiety for some tidings of the fate of the petition. Save Murty McGonigal and Narcisse Charbonneau, not a man among them but believed

now that he had proven unworthy of their confidence. Little by little her own faith in Barclay Craig and his love-sealed pledges was slowly slipping away.

Could he be ill—or dead? At the very thought her heart seemed to falter, but better that—better far that than treachery or indifference.

For once again Flora McIntyre was face to face with privation. More than a month had passed since Cameron's generous donation, and of that but a few shillings remained. With proud promptitude, she had insisted on repaying the protesting McGonigal his advance for the purchase of the cow, and another visit of the doctor from Perth had left her but the scanty pieces of silver in the little purse she carried in her hand. Far too few were they for the purchase of the provisions of which the McIntyre home was now in actual need.

And to-day she must do that which never before one of the McIntyres had thought to do, ask for credit at the store of Dugald Anderson, whom she well knew was but the representative of the Laird. Nothing that had come to her in the vicissitudes of the last year had brought to the girl's proud heart such a sting of bitter humiliation.

And yet she was not without hope. Of Dugald Anderson himself she had but kindly memories. In the early days of the grant the storekeeper, a lone bachelor, had been a frequent visitor at the home of the McIntyres, but with John Mohr's entanglement in Miller's quarrel with the Laird, and Anderson's appointment as the Chief's storekeeper, the intimacy had come to an end.

As the jangling of the bell above the door announced the entrance of Flora McIntyre, the handful of elderly men seated on nail-keg and counter stirred uneasily and murmured a quiet formal greeting.

"The Tarrier's Privy Council," Murty had dubbed this coterie of the Chief's supporters who gathered daily in the store of Dugald Anderson to canvass the affairs of the district. Roddy, McArthur, Peter McNab and Alec McDonald had indeed no cause to complain of the Laird. Generous

grants of land, frequent loans of money, and a warm welcome at the hearth of Kennell Lodge were theirs when they willed.

Their keen observant eyes and listening ears attended the girl's every move, for already rumour had been busy concerning the plight of the McIntyres, and the gossips of the grant had speculated curiously on their means of subsistence during the long winter months.

Well aware of the reasons for their silent scrutiny, Flora's cheek reddened. But her voice was clear and steady as she replied to Dugald Anderson's salutation.

Calmly she named her purchases. Already the little pile of paper-wrapped parcels was growing in front of her.

"Now, Mr. Anderson," she said, when she had reached the end of her list, "I'll pay you for the sugar and the tea, but I will have to ask you to wait for the money for the other things. I am sure——"

"Na, na, Miss McIntyre, I canna do it," interrupted the storekeeper, as he swept the tea and sugar to one side.

Anderson was a plump round-faced man, with shining bald head and shrewd grey eyes set close together under his bushy white brows. As he took the coins she handed him his eyes rested for a moment on the girl's embarrassed face, and a more kindly expression crept into his rubicund countenance.

"Miss Flora," he whispered across the counter, "come wi' me. I would crack wi' ye a bit."

Wonderingly she followed him behind the row of pigeon holes that did duty as the grant's only post-office.

"I've no forgot," he began, "the wee lassie I use to carry sweeties to, long years ago. And I am sore fashed I canna give ye the bit things, but MacTavish has given me strict orders to give ye no credit. Noo hearken to an auld man's advice that's weel meant. I'm thinkin' ye'd better take Allan Dhu. The lad loves ye weel—— Hold a bit, lassie," he protested, as Flora sprang angrily to her feet, "for auld syne's sake. Ye can make a man o' the lad. He has good blood in him. The Laird grows auld, and

'twull no be long till the affairs o' the grant are in the hands o' Allan Dhu. Ye could do what ye wull wi' the lad and 'twould make an end o' trouble for yersal and for all the grant. I'm minded masel that 'tis the Lord's own way out o' all our difficulties and 'twould no be godly, lassie, to stand in the way o' the Lord's plans."

The clanging of the door bell told of a new arrival and the quavering, ancient voice of Sandy Fisher announced gleefully:

"I hae grand news, folk. MacTavish has just been tellin' me he's had word from Montreal that Lord Durham has gone home. "Noo," he chuckled, "we'll hear no more o' the fool petitions. Weel I kenned the radical Governor would no last long."

The girl's face paled and sudden hopelessness seized her. Lord Durham, the young, high-spirited, democratic nobleman upon whom she and the clansmen had centered all their hopes, superseded by another. Fearing that her voice would betray her agitation, she answered Dugald's questioning look by a silent shake of the head, and walked out into the store.

Her two small parcels in her hand, her head held high, though unshed tears of mortification were trembling on her lashes, she left the store and hurried on her homeward way. Against Dugald Anderson she had no resentment. She recognised the man's good intent. But her heart swelled with bitterness as she pictured how the story of her humiliation and discomfiture would be spread far and wide by the elderly gossips who had witnessed it.

And now for the first time despair held her in its grip. Around her day by day the coils of cruel circumstance were drawing closer and tighter. Turn which way she would, there seemed no escape. The time was at hand for the sowing of the clearing, and she had neither the seed-grain nor the money to employ the necessary labour. Her father had informed her in his last letter, that he was being held for the balance due on the amount of Miller's bond and not for resisting the survey. More than seven months

would elapse till he had served the necessary time to liquidate the amount. At the end of that period he would doubtless be prosecuted on the more serious charge.

Could it be that Dugald Anderson was right—that the struggle against fate was a futile one, that it was to be her lot to serve as a sacrifice on the family altar?

Again came the thought of Barclay Craig and with it a wrench of the soul. To him she had pledged her faith and given her heart without reservation, and now the future which she had blushingly pictured to herself in the long months since his departure, seemed a dream that was turning to bitter ashes of disillusionment. Four months of silence. There could be no other explanation; the man was faithless. Even if he had failed that would not have excused his silence. Ready would she have been to accept his word that he had done all that man could do. But now Lord Durham was gone, and with his passing, vanished all hope for the success of the petition.

Even if he had failed, was not his place here—if he loved her, with her,—with the people to whose service he had pledged himself? But caught up again in the great swirl of the city's life, he had evidently washed his hands of the grant and its affairs, and erased from his mind the memory of the woodland lassie, with whose parting kiss he had ridden off into the great world. He had been conquered by the relentless press of events and how was she, a lone girl, bereft of her male protectors, to stand out against it?

But again the memory of Craig's words, the look in his eyes, as he had taken her scarf and pressed it to his lips, came to her in poignant vividness. Oh! that he who had seemed so strong should have been so weak,—that he in whom she had placed all her trust should have proven so unworthy.

Her thoughts turned to Allan Dhu. She found herself thinking not of the ruthless insolence with which he had once forced his caresses upon her, but of the humility in his bearing, and the sorrowing sincerity apparent in his

every word,—of the financial assistance he had so unobtrusively tendered her. Were he to offer it again she would not—she could not now refuse.

Her own dream had vanished, and there now remained for her but one interest,—her family. For them must her pride be sacrificed? She would ask a loan of Allan—yes, even if it meant the setting of her feet on a pathway that might lead to years of unloved wedlock. For money she must have and that speedily.

Perhaps Dugald Anderson was right. As with Barclay Craig in his prison cell, so to Flora McIntyre, seated in the gloaming, grappling with her life-problem, came a wave of Scottish fatalism. Was she to be the vicarious sacrifice to purchase comfort for her mother, peace for her family, and prosperity and quiet for her kinsmen? It must be so.

High strung with weeks of worry, and fired with the thought of the possible sacrifice the future might bring, she secured writing materials and stepping to the table wrote:

“Allan Dhu McNab, Esq.,
Kennell Lodge.”

Even as the words sprang up before her eyes, another vision flashed upon her, that of Allan Dhu beside himself with liquor, boasting in some grog shop in the village of his contribution to the support of the daughter of John Mohr McIntyre. She recalled the words with which Narcisse Charbonneau had ended his recital of the events in the deserted cabin the night he had rescued Craig.

“W'en de drink is in dat Allan, Miss Flora, de man have in him a tousand devil.”

With a low moan her head sank on her arms, and she wept soft, silent tears of anguish. The quill pen dropped from her fingers and fluttered unnoticed to the floor.

Silence, save for the eerie call of the night-hawks in the gloaming without, the soft fall of the embers in the hearth, and the low sobbing of the girl at the table.

Through the partly opened window floated the rhythm of a song. A woman's voice, high pitched in its intensity, growing ever nearer and nearer, was singing:

"By yon bonnie banks, and yon bonnie braes,
Where the sun shines bright on Loch Lomond.
Where me an' my true love were ever wont to gae
By the bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond.
But me and my true love wull never meet again
On the bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond."

Through the window she caught a glimpse of Meg McIntosh, the half-demented victim of Allan Dhu's youthful folly, her unkempt locks crowned with a garland of fresh green leaves. As the wanderer passed the door of the McIntyre home, her shrill voice, vibrant with melancholy, fraught with a burden of unutterable woe, swept on:

"The wee bird may sing,
And the wild flowers may spring,
And in the sunshine the waters be sleeping,
But the broken heart wull ken,
Na second spring again,
Though the woeful may cease from their greeting."

Flora McIntyre shuddered. Was such to be her fate—would the eyes of Barclay Craig never look into hers again—"a broken heart that would ken na second spring."

Must she trust her good name to the keeping of a waster of women's lives, a despoiler of women's virtue. Over her pure young soul surged a wave of fierce revolt. No—No! Not even for father, mother, or brother. She would not—she could not.

Impetuously she snatched up the sheet of paper on which she had written the address of Allan Dhu. But even as her fingers bent in a tearing motion, a sharp knock at the door caused her to slip the unwritten missive hurriedly into her bodice.

"Come in," she called, in the custom of the backwoods. Barclay Craig, his face aglow, rushed into the room. In

a twinkling his arms were about her and he was raining kisses on her face.

For a moment she yielded to the tempting sweetness of the embrace, then with one protesting hand against his breast she drew away from him.

Craig puzzled, looked at her, his exultant eyes shining with happiness.

"What right have you," she asked in icy tones, "to—to even touch me?"

Then, as the memory of his seeming neglect, her own heart burnings, and disillusionment swept over her.

"You, who for more than four months, have ignored me,—not even a scratch of a pen—for me, or for the men, who were waiting—waiting——"

"But, Flora—Flora," protested Craig, "I could not. I was in prison from the first hour I arrived in Montreal till a few days ago. And," he added joyously, "we have won—we have won. I placed the petition in the hands of the Governor and he——"

"But Lord Durham is gone," she said, utterly mystified by Craig's triumphant mien.

"And his successor, Lord Sydenham," he interrupted quickly, "is a more radical reformer than Durham himself. He has pledged me his word that he will send a special commissioner to investigate the conditions in the grant."

Flora McIntyre, astounded, stood for a moment staring at him with pale face and speechless lips. The man whose faith she had doubted, whom she had pictured as forgetful of her and the clansmen, whose life and hers she had been, perhaps, about to mar forever, stood before her, vindicated and triumphant. Slowly the tremendous import of his words penetrated her almost benumbed brain. He had suffered for her humiliation and imprisonment.

"You were in prison?" she questioned weakly.

Craig scanned her face anxiously, then with careful solicitude led her to a seat. Briefly he told the story, his sudden arrest, the executions in the jail-yard, the threats

of the Laird, the ending of martial law and his interview with the Governor.

Flora listened, tumultuous gladness struggling with remorse and humiliation. She raised her trembling hand as if to still the panting rise and fall of her bosom. Its pressure brought to her the sudden consciousness of the paper bearing Allan Dhu's name, now lying next her heart. It seemed to burn her like fire.

Impetuously she wrenched herself free from the man's clinging arm, ran to the hearth, drew forth the unwritten missive and tearing it to shreds, dropped the fragments into the flames. As they flared up in a sudden glow, she turned to meet Craig, who, amazed, had advanced a few steps after her.

"What is it, Flora?" he asked.

"Oh Barclay—Barclay"—she sobbed, almost hysterically, as she hid her joy-flushed face on his shoulder. "I cannot-tell-you, I cannot-tell-you. Promise me," she pleaded as her arms went about his neck, and her tear-stained face pressed close to his bearded cheek, "oh! promise me, that you will never, never, *never* ask me."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CHIEF OF THE OTTAWAS

FAR from propitious for the Laird of McNab had been the course of events during the last few months.

The legal success of Donald McNaughten and the seizure of the Chief's horse had struck a telling blow against his supposed invincibility, and the arrest of McIntyre and the subsequent relentless pursuit of Peter had alienated many of his most faithful supporters. McNaughten had taken the offensive and backed by some of the boldest among the clansmen had petitioned the Grand Jury of the district to declare the Laird a public nuisance, before the District Court. Among the grand jurors were many new settlers from the southern part of the Bathurst district, who knew little and cared less about the Chief's hereditary rights and with but a few dissenting votes they concurred in the petition. The Judges of the Assizes, however, all personal friends of the McNab, had ordered the petition filed and refused to take any action upon it. Yet the move had brought the affairs of the grant before the public to a greater extent than ever before and was considered a partial victory.

One of the principal items in the petition had been the Laird's persecution of John Paris, a young man from Ramsay, who at the solicitation of McIntyre and McFarlane, had built a grist mill on the Waba Creek near White Lake. Located on a Clergy Reserve lot, it was apparently beyond the Chief's interference, but at the suggestion of MacTavish, the Laird, who had a small and long-disused mill dam further up the creek, had raised the level of his own dam some six feet, thus effectually cutting off the water from Paris' mill. The grists of many of the settlers had lain all

winter on the floor of the Paris mill, and they were finally obliged to transport them ten miles to the Pakenham mills.

With his own protégé, George Buchanan, the Chief was also at loggerheads. Buchanan finding that some of the Laird's friends were cutting on his three-mile strip each side of the Madawaska had protested, only to be informed that the concession was not an exclusive one. Disgusted by what he considered evidence of the Chief's duplicity, he shut down both his mills and refused to resume operations, or to pay the annual subsidy of three hundred pounds, till his rights were clearly defined. He had placed the matter in the hands of his attorney, who had instituted suit for damages against the Chief.

The embryo village of Arnprior had become a scene of desolation. The few inhabitants who depended on the mills for support were gone, and now only Tom Hilyard's tavern, Hans Schubrink's grog shop, and Dugald Anderson's general store were the only occupied buildings, amid a wilderness of crumbling roofs, broken window panes, and open sagging doors. The whole economic progress of the grant had come to a standstill, and the clansmen, even including the handful who still supported the Laird, were regarding the future with anxiety.

It was of these difficulties that Chancellor MacTavish was meditating as he shuffled up and down the room, his brow knit in perplexity, his forefinger and thumb stroking the length of his bony jaw. Ever and anon he glanced anxiously at the clock, for he was momentarily expecting the return of the Laird from the new capital of the united Canadas at Kingston, where he had gone on a mission the purpose of which was known only to the McNab and himself.

Lipsev crawled timorously into the room and murmured softly as he laid a bundle of letters and papers on the table:

"The post has arrived."

MacTavish broke the seal on several letters, glanced over them carelessly, and cast them aside. He wiped his

glasses, trimmed the candle wicks, and placing the light close to his elbow, sat down with a sigh of content for a leisurely perusal of the Montreal papers. Suddenly he sat bolt upright, his eyes dilated; his mouth fell open.

"My God—my God!" he muttered aghast.

In his trembling hands he held the latest copy of the *Examiner* containing Hincks' attack on the Laird of McNab.

The fiery journalist had kept his word. The article which gave the text of the petition in full, and detailed the wrongs of the clansmen, filled four closely printed columns of the front page. Hincks had exhausted all the resources of his vituperative vocabulary; nothing was left unsaid. For in regard to things of which he was not certain, the pugnacious journalist had indulged in many a shrewd and accurate guess. He charged the Chief with having exacted rent from many who were under no just obligation to pay it, that he sold and received the value of thousands of feet of timber from the lands of the settlers, that he had plundered the timber from the crown lands adjacent to his grant and had rafted it to Quebec, that he had harassed many of the settlers with law-suits and had imprisoned others causelessly, using his position as a magistrate to serve his own vengeful ends. The story of the Laird's persecution of Miller, McIntyre and McFarlane was told in full, and his real purpose in driving a road across John Mohr's land described. But on Allan Dhu Hincks had emptied all his vials of wrath. He denounced the son of the Laird as a stench in the nostrils of any decent community and as a menace to the morals of the grant. But it was the concluding paragraph, which cast a doubt on the Laird's ownership of the township, that caused the sweat to gather on MacTavish's brow, as he sat humped up in his chair.

"My God—My God!" he muttered fearfully. "The Laird wull gang stark, raving mad when he sees it."

The jingle of harness and the sound of voices at the door

caused the Chancellor to hurriedly conceal the newspaper under the table covering.

With a cheery greeting to MacTavish, the Chief strode into the room. He was evidently in good humour. As he doffed his heavy coat, lit a pipe and drew his chair up in front of the hearth, his jovial smile had in it something of triumphant elation.

"Did ye get them?" inquired MacTavish in a low tone.

"No, I didna." The Chancellor's reply was a stare of consternation. The Chief, as he emitted placid puffs of smoke, eyed him with evident amusement.

"Ye didna get them," the astounded MacTavish managed to say. "Ye couldna see them—your journey was for naught."

"Not at all—not at all, Chancellor. Listen, man." The Laird bent over and lowered his voice. "They're where no man wull lay hand or eye on them. They lie ten fathom deep at the bottom o' Lake Ontario. In moving the government papers from York to Kingston two o' the barges went down in a storm. Wi' them went all the papers of Sir Francis Bond Head's administration—the record o' the meetings o' the Privy Council for that year and all the letters and correspondence relating to the grant. There is noo no scrap o' paper in existence to challenge the word o' the McNab," he concluded triumphantly.

As the full import of the Laird's words penetrated the puzzled mind of the Chancellor, his look of perplexity gave way to one of satisfaction.

"My God—how fortunate!" he exclaimed. "Bond Head's been dead these six months, and his secretary, Sir John Colborne, went down in a ship bound for Australia." His thin lips twisted in keen enjoyment of the situation.

"Noo that," he pronounced, "is one example o' the wise and just interposition o' Providence in the affairs o' men. Masel, I'll be tellin' the Lord my thanks this verra night."

"How's all at the Waba Creek dam?" queried the Chief.

MacTavish chuckled. "The water's unco' low this year and it's no wi'in a foot o' the top o' our dam. The cursed

rascals, the Black Boys, tried to drive aff the guards but a few shots sent them scatterin'—they'll no be tryin' it again."

"How about the rents for last quarter?" queried the Chief.

"All paid but two."

"And who might they be?"

"Duncan Cameron and——"

"Oh! Duncan," the Laird smiled good-naturedly. "Where's Duncan been stoppin' these last twelve months. He's been unco' long away this time."

"Livin' by himsal in an auld sugar bush shanty by the Dochart."

The Laird sat for a moment silent, his elbows on his knees, a softened look on his stern old face as he recalled the Duncan Cameron of the old days—the jaunty, fearless, madcap youth of long ago.

"Ye better tell Duncan to come home to the Lodge when ye see him next. The old fool," he said almost fondly. "He'll be takin' his death o' cold some o' these raw nights."

Concealing the uneasiness he felt, MacTavish responded with quick mendacity:

"Huh! he wull no come. The last time I saw him he cursed ye roundly and tellt me to tell ye he'd ne'er again set foot in Kennell Lodge."

"The old fool," repeated the Laird, but with no sign of anger. "He was aye a high spirited lad. Weel—weel, he'll be needin' the bit money he gets from home. Let him gang his own gait. Dinna ask him for rent. Who was the other didna pay?"

"That damned witch woman, Amelia Graham. She's been in that auld cabin of Wullie McNab's these four year and we hae'na had a penny o' rent. She has a wee bit garden in the auld clearing. I could rent the place——"

"Noo, why the De'il," broke in the Laird, irritably, "should ye be axing her for rent, when I tellt ye two years syne to send her a pound every month. Ye hae no been pesterin her agin?"

"I hae no been near the house," returned MacTavish,

"and I hae sent her the money wi' no name signed to it, as ye bid me. But," he protested with a sigh, "'tis a shamefu' waste of good siller."

The McNab seemed not to hear him. He sat, his chin sunk low on his breast, his memory busy with the thoughts of the past. He was a boy again amid the hills of Perthshire gazing down into a girl's lovelit eyes. His rugged face lit by the flare of the embers took on a dreaming kindliness.

Unnoticed the door had opened silently, a blanketed Indian stood within the room.

"Bo Jo," he grunted.

In spite of his seventy years, Mitchiwanimiki—Big Thunder, the chief of the Ottawas, was still as straight as a pine of his native forest. Naught of age showed in his face save the radiating network of wrinkles about his shrewd intelligent eyes, and the sunken hollows of his cheeks. He was dressed in trousers, moccasins and a buckskin shirt, while from the band about his still coal-black hair drooped a single eagle feather. Silently accepting the pipe which the Chief pressed upon him, he dropped his blanket over the back of a chair and taking a seat continued to smoke in silence.

"The White Chief is well?" he asked at length.

"Very weel," responded the McNab, "and Big Thunder and his people?"

The Indian slowly shook his head. "No well—Mooch hard winter. Deer no plenty any more—bear much scarce. White men come—heap more all time—otter all gone—beaver near all gone. Soon Injun he go too," he said, with pathetic resignation. After a pause, he asked suddenly:

"Roadmaker—he here?"

"No," the Laird responded almost brusquely. "I have sent him away."

The irritation in his tone at the mention of Barclay Craig's Indian name did not escape the sharp ear of the aborigine. His eyes still fixed on the dancing flames, he said softly, but firmly:

"Roadmaker—he—my friend."

Allan Dhu, several letters in his hand, came quietly into the room. He stepped over to the table, dropped his own letters on a heap of MacTavish's freshly sealed missives. Suddenly his attention was riveted on one of the latter, bearing a Perth address. As he held it in his hand, he cast a quick apprehensive glance at the trio about the fire, then sure that he was safe from detection slipped it unnoticed into his pocket.

As Allan drew his chair up to the hearth, Big Thunder eyed him closely. He had but little reason to love the young man. More than once he had complained to the Chief regarding Allan's familiarity with some of the frailer females of his flock, but in the glance he bent to-night on the son of the Laird, there seemed something intensely hostile.

"Little time," he resumed. "Big Thunder and his people go to new place. Government man, he come from down river, speak of much land—good hunting ground—up the Coulonge. In one moon, maybe not so long—we go."

"My heart is heavy at the tidings, Big Thunder," said the Laird, in the grandiloquent manner of the Indians. MacTavish grinned. The Laird's considerate treatment of Big Thunder, who considered the McNab as a brother chief, always amused him.

For a time the Indian sat silent, his sharp sidewise glances directed at Allan Dhu. Then, as if he had come to a conclusion, he sat erect in his chair, and turned his piercing gaze full on the son of the Laird.

"The Black Robe at Quyon—Pere Dontigny," he began, "he all time tell Indian, when he make confession, to give back things no belong to him. One my young men find this."

Without removing his eyes from the face of Allan Dhu, he drew from his clothing a jeweled dagger and held it towards the young man. It was the dirk that on that spring morning almost a year ago had flashed above the head of Barclay Craig and a few days later sought the life of Peter McIntyre.

"Aye, that's mine own skean," said Allan composedly. "Where did he find it?"

"By the Dochart." As the Indian uttered the words, his gimlet-like eyes bored into the countenance of Allan Dhu. Allan's brow clouded, as he tried in vain to recall the events of the night after he had left the home of the McIntyres. It was the following morning he had first missed the knife.

"Thank you—Big Thunder, thank you," he said, as with no sign of embarrassment, he reached into his pocket and handed the Indian a coin.

Big Thunder, ignoring the money in the outstretched hand, rose to his full height, took his blanket from the chair and draped it about his shoulders. With grave dignity, he shook hands with the Laird and MacTavish and ignoring Allan stepped towards the door. With his hand on the knob he turned about and bent on him a slow and steady gaze so fraught with sinister menace that when the door had closed after him, the three stood staring at one another inquiringly.

"Damnation!" snapped the Chief. "I tellt ye, Allan, to keep away from Big Thunder's village. 'Tis plain he's angry wi' ye."

"I can no imagine why," returned Allan. "I hae no been near his wigwams for three months noo." Taking a taper from the table he left the room.

Allan gone, quickly the Chancellor drew from under the table-covering the copy of the *Examiner* and handed it to the Laird. One glance at its head lines, a hurried scrutiny of the closely printed columns, and the genial mood that had marked the Chief's behavior since his return vanished in an outburst of profanity.

"The scribbling cur," he cried. "I'll hae the law on him for this. MacTavish, start a libel suit agin him for ten thousand pounds. I'll make him sweat," he fumed, as he strode snorting up and down the room. "I'll beggar him. Zounds! but I'm sore fashed! He's no gentleman, or I'd call him out and wipe out the insult at the pistol's mouth.

My God, what's the world comin' to when a man o' my standing can be vilified by sic a scurrilous whelp. I'll make him sweat—I'll make him sweat."

"Aye, that we wull," grinned MacTavish. "We'll make him sweat guineas and sovereigns."

Voices at the door attracted their attention. Piper Mc-Nee stepped into the room.

"There's a wee bit light down by the lake," he said. "I hae sent Angus to take a look at it."

All three stepped to the door and stood gazing down toward the lake shore three hundred yards away at the foot of the terraces. Between the pine trunks they could glimpse a growing illumination.

"Noo, what the De'il," began the Laird, as Angus came running up the acclivity.

"'Tis the boat house," he exclaimed. "'Tis all afire and heaped wi'in and wi'out wi' fat pine. Ye canna save it. 'Twas the——"

His words were smothered by a wild clatter of hoofs and an outburst of derisive yells from the gate at the end of their avenue.

The Black Boys had struck again. Foiled in their attempt on the Waba Creek dam, they had fired the Laird's boat-house containing his pleasure yacht and a half dozen bark canoes.

All rushed down to the scene of the conflagration to find that there was no hope of saving either the building or its contents.

The Chief returned to the living room and threw himself into a chair with an air of desperation. His brow had grown dark and his face heavy with anger.

"MacTavish," he ordered, shortly. "Write once more to the Governor about the lawlessness o' those scunnerls. Tell him the tale of the night's doings, and ax him agin for permission to form that permanent armed posse."

The Chancellor, struck by a sudden thought, stepped to the table, and hastily ran over several unopened letters. Quickly he broke the seals on an official looking missive.

"Ha! 'tis here," he cried exultantly, "'tis here." He handed the enclosure to the Laird.

"Noo, by the God that made me," said the Chief solemnly, when he had glanced over it. "I'll make short work o' they rascals. I'll hae them shot down like mad dogs. Send Angus to John McNab, and all the others ye can depend on. Write to Constable Madigan at Perth to come and take command. Bid him bring ten men wi' him. We will get ten more in the grant. Wi' guns in their hands, we will show the world whether or no, I be the Chief o' the clan McNab.

"McNee! McNee!" he shouted.

The aged piper hurried into the room, his pipes under his arm.

"Noo play the 'Failte Mhic an Aba,'* Jeems, an' put ye your soul in it. From noo on, I rule the grant wi' a hand o' iron, I hae been mairciful too long."

* The McNab's salute.

CHAPTER XXV

"A RIFT IN THE LUTE"

AS Allan Dhu McNab walked his horse slowly from the gates of Kennell Lodge towards the village, his eyes swept the road ahead expectantly.

There was that in his face to-day which men had not been wont to see. The bold, arrogant mien in which he bore such a resemblance to the Laird was gone and in its place reigned a brooding, melancholy wistfulness. He sighed deeply, but even as he sighed he smiled as if with secret amusement and the lines about his mouth hardened with determination.

"Any mail for me?" he queried, as Angus, a leathern mail-bag over his shoulder, came cantering up. "Let me see what ye hae?"

As he passed a handful of letters deftly through his fingers Allan's face brightened with satisfaction. He dropped the bulk of them back into 'Angus' bag and placed the others in his own pocket. Then, as he slipped a sovereign into the lad's hand, he warned:

"Say naught to the Laird about this."

Angus grinned and nodded. It was some missive from a fair lady in Montreal—some affair of which Allan wished his father to be kept in ignorance, he concluded.

Angus out of sight, Allan hastily drew the letters from his pocket, singled out one and broke the seal. It was addressed to the Chief and bore the Perth postmark. As the contents met his eye, he smiled grimly.

Through the village and far out on the Flat Rapid road, he continued his aimless ride. About him under the vivifying sun, all nature was vibrant with life. In the

recesses of the woods sounded the contented drumming of partridges, chipmunks ran daringly across the road, and squirrels scolded from stump and fence rail. Blue jays and orioles, flashes of brilliant colour, darted vividly amid the sombre green of the pines. But for Allen Dhu McNab, the golden glory of the May morning had no message of joy. He rode on hardly conscious of his surroundings, his head bent in endless reverie.

With the passing of the days, his restlessness and his unhappiness had increased, and to-day, as never before, the love of Flora McIntyre permeated his whole being. His keen desire for a thing so clean, so beautiful, so delicate had driven much of the brutishness out of his heart and left only the racial virtues of a McNab.

Since his sudden debauch the evening of his visit to Flora McIntyre,—a debauch that had not been repeated, all desire for liquor seemed to have left him. Over-wrought night and day with the intensity of his longing and ever seeking a path by which it might be attained, his craving for alcohol was lost in the never-ending turmoil of his inner self.

His interview with the daughter of John Mohr McIntyre, her kindly but dignified treatment of him, had driven home to him with crushing force as nothing else could have done the perception of the fact that it was not the feud between his father and hers that raised between them an insurmountable barrier,—not that as much as his own shortcomings.

Yet—yet—his heart warmed at the memory of how she had given him her hand as a token of her generous forgiveness. In spite of her definite refusal, he still clung to that as an omen of better things. At least, that much was gained—she no longer numbered him among her enemies.

True to his promise he had for an hour last night urged upon his father the advisability of a more conciliatory course towards the clansmen. The Laird had listened, at

first with amazement but finally with impatience and had ended the interview with the sarcastic remark:

"Tuts, lad, has the whuskey bred maggots in your head? After that scunner! Hincks' attack I canna yield one inch, 'twould be an admission that I hae been in the wrong. The reform administration at Kingston, noo that yon radical Governor is gone,—will no last six months, and my friends wull be in power again."

Absorbed in thought, Allan, riding on with slackened rein, had failed to notice that his horse had wandered from the road, and was now pushing his way along a woodland path, bordered close by thick shrubbery. As he turned a corner in the narrow trail, his steed's startled snort caused Allan to raise his head.

In a twinkling, he had dismounted and stood hat in hand facing Flora McIntyre.

Uneasiness for a moment darkened her face, but as her swift glance noted the man's respectful attitude, the steadiness of his lips and eyes, her countenance brightened with relief. Then with a sweet smile and without a word, she extended her hand.

"Fortune has favoured me this morning, Miss Flora, in this unexpected meeting," he said, as his hungry gaze devoured the girl's face. "I hae much to tell ye."

Her eyes lightened hopefully. "You have spoken with your father?" was the quick question.

"Aye, I hae, but to no avail," he said, with a tired sigh. "A month ago he might hae hearkened to masel, but noo since he has the permit for the armed posse and sore fashed by the writings o' Hincks, his mood is implacable."

Flora's countenance clouded for a moment with disappointment.

"But you did your best," she said quickly. "No one can do more. For that my warmest thanks are yours."

Allan made no reply. He stood leaning on his saddle, his dark Spanish-looking eyes filled with inexpressible longing, full on the girl's face. Not insensible of the scrutiny

and its meaning her glance fell and the colour in her cheek deepened.

Then her generous heart warmed with pity for the man, for his wasted life, his splendid, neglected possibilities, and above all for his unrealisable hopes.

"When last you spoke with me," she began hesitatingly, "you expressed a wish to serve me. May I ask you to give me another promise?"

"Ye hae but to command me."

"A moment ago, you said that Fortune had favoured you this morning. Not this morning but always, have you been favoured by the Fates. They have given you health, strength, wealth and the prestige of an ancient and honoured name. Somewhere that mother whom you never saw is following with spirit eyes the man who was once a little babe in her arms. To her memory, and to the McNab's hopes of you, you owe a duty. There is within you another Allan McNab, of whose nobility of soul and whose greatness of heart both you and I have at times caught a glimpse. I would see you at all times, that Allan McNab, sober, kind, thoughtful, honourable and industrious. Could you not promise me that?"

The man's lips parted in amazement and a wave of joyous red suffused his dark face. The kindness in the girl's eyes rekindled his hopes anew.

"Ye ax this—ye care enough to ax this?"

He came a step nearer and grasped the hand she had raised in warning and pressed it close in both of his.

"And my reward"—he urged. "Wull ye no say——"

"No—no," she protested as she drew her hand away. "Not that—not that, you must not misunderstand. Again I must be frank with you, and say that you must put away from you that thought forever. It can never be. For your own sake, I ask that you make of yourself the man you ought to be,—the man you can be if you will."

Allan turned his face away and was silent for a space, then he said quietly, a little quiver in his voice:

"That ye care enough to ax is joy unspeakable to me. I—I—will do what I can.

"And noo," he went on, "I must tell ye that which has been on my mind since the interview wi' feyther. Held as he is in the grip o' MacTavish, he canna be moved, but I hae another plan. I dinna doubt that in his heart he is tired o' strife but the pride o' the McNabs holds him away from the slightest sign o' surrender. But could he dispose o' his holdings at a fair price, I believe he would leave America for good. Already I hae been in communication wi' men o' affairs in Montreal, who may consider the purchase o' the grant. My own private purse I can use as a means to this end. If the plan succeeds, the grant will be administered in the modern way wi'out feudal rights or clansmen's duties."

"Oh—oh," exclaimed the girl, "that would be splendid—splendid, and you have thought out this plan? You are doing this for me? How—how—can I thank you?"

Her full rich eyes, soft with kindness, moist with emotion, were gazing full into his. The man trembled. His arms ached to reach out and gather her to his bosom, but he held himself in check.

"For masel," he said pathetically, "there is noo but one source o' happiness, that I may in some way serve you. My life and masel are yours to do wi' as ye wull."

"Purity and delicacy such as yours," he went on thoughtfully, "until noo I kent only in the abstract as something existing in books and cloisters, but since ye came into my life, since I have kenned ye, I am ahunger for better things than I hae ever dreamed afore. The promise ye axed of me was given afore ye axed it, as far as I may be able. I may no hae your love, but it wull be a wee bit happiness to ken that I may hae a hand in fashioning the happiness o' the woman I love in vain, and that in the years to come she may think of me wi' kindness in her heart."

He was eloquent in his dejection. With head bowed and tones soft and low, he might have been a mediæval

knight fresh from scenes of carnage, pleading in supplication at the shrine of a Madonna.

He raised her hand to his lips, and his dark eyes filled with misery, looked at her for a moment, then he mounted his horse and cantered away down the lane.

With swelling throat and tear-brimming eyes, Flora McIntyre stood looking after him till he disappeared about a bend in the shrubbery. As she wiped the tell-tale evidences of emotion from her cheeks, the sound of swishing bushes came to her from behind. Quickly she turned.

Seated on his horse not fifty feet away was Barclay Craig. He was regarding her curiously.

"Oh! Barclay, is it you!" she exclaimed joyously, as she stepped down the path towards him.

Unexpectedly and unintentionally, Craig had ridden about a curve in the hazel-bordered path, and had been an involuntary witness of her parting with Allan Dhu. As he dropped from his horse and stood leaning on the saddle, he said in a voice very even and very cold:

"I crave your pardon. It was by accident I fell upon this interview. I can only blame the bend in the path."

He made no motion to approach; he seemed to be waiting.

Flora McIntyre's even white teeth showed between her curving red lips in a mischievous smile, and her eyes danced. The man was actually jealous.

"Come sit by me, Barclay," she said, as she took a seat on a fallen log and smoothed out her skirt. "I'll tell you all about it. Don't—don't stand there like a statue of Patience smiling at Grief."

"Allan, you know was very kind to me, at least," she faltered, "he—he would have been kind—this winter when mother was so very sick. He even offered to help——"

"You know for what purpose?" Craig interrupted. "The man is incapable of a generous, unselfish thought. He would have murdered me if it had not been for Narcisse," he added, as he related again the incidents of the night in the deserted cabin.

"But he was very drunk that night—he had been drinking for days before the fight at Sand Point," she protested, "but of late, they say, he is keeping sober. This I know,—He *has* changed greatly. Even now he is planning to bring about the purchase of the grant by Montreal men of means," she explained, as she told in greater detail of Allan's partial reformation and his altered demeanor towards herself.

Craig listened, at first in utter amazement, then with incredulity, and finally with mounting indignation. His memories of Allan Dhu were bitter and vindictive, and he did not doubt that his improved deportment was but a cloak to cover his designs on the woman at his side.

"And you believe him?" he asked incredulously. "Can you not see that he is playing a game. It is not the love of good that entered his soul. It is the hope of winning the hand of a woman that has changed him, not from a scoundrel to a saint, but to a hypocrite."

But the girl's generous soul warmed in the defence of the absent. Protestingly, she explained. Craig's brow darkened angrily.

"So Allan Dhu McNab has been a visitor at your home, while I was in a jail cell in Montreal. What was that paper?" he asked suddenly, as he rose to his feet, "that you so hurriedly dropped in the hearth the day I returned?"

The colour in Flora McIntyre's face faded and she started uneasily.

"I—I—I told you—you must never ask," she said faintly.

"But I made no such promise. I ask you now." Craig's insistent gaze was full upon her.

She sat very still with downcast eyes. How explain—how tell him that on it were the first words of a letter to Allan Dhu. Her paling face and quivering mouth were evidences of her agitation.

"Had it aught to do with Allan Dhu? Will you say to me that it had naught to do with him?" he persisted.

"You cannot—you will not," cried Craig, almost in agony. "And so I find you,—my betrothed wife, assisting in Allan

Dhu's reformation by keeping tryst with him here in this lonely spot——"

The girl's face flamed with sudden anger. She sprang to her feet, and with snapping eyes, confronted him.

"Barclay Craig," she cried. "You wrong your manhood, you wrong yourself, and you wrong me, by such a suspicion. If you are capable of such a thought, you are by no means the man I thought you. And with such as I seem to you, you will never wish to wed. Here,—I would not give my life to the care of a man who can so misjudge me."

She had wrenched the ring from her finger and was reaching it to him in the hollow of her hand.

For an instant the two faced one another, two proud young souls, the man suffering but hard and inflexible, the woman, with a mighty effort holding back her tears, and biting her lip in an effort to still its trembling.

Craig's face blanched a little. For a space his sombre hazel eyes searched her countenance, but he saw there no signs of relenting. Then as if every minute, muscular action was an agony he reached out slowly, took the ring in his fingers and dropped it into his pocket. Without parting word, he sprang to his horse and trotted off down the lane.

For almost a minute Flora McIntyre stood staring after him as if in a dream.

Then with a sighing moan, "Barclay, oh, Barclay!" she dropped to the log, covered her face with her hands and burst into a storm of uncontrollable sobs.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PRIDE OF DUNCAN CAMERON

FOR Barclay Craig, life had turned to a dull and sodden grey.

It was two weeks now since his fateful interview with Flora McIntyre and though day by day, hour by hour, his soul was filled with longing and his heart ached for a sight of her piquant face, he had made no attempt to seek a reconciliation.

Except possibly the time he had met Allan Dhu the evening of his arrival in the grant a year before, he had never seen the man save when he was under the influence of liquor. Hardly a day had he been in the grant after his return from Montreal, when a rumour had reached him of Allan's visit to the McIntyre home. Then and there had flashed upon him the memory of the paper Flora had so hurriedly cast into the hearth and her almost imploring words,

"You must never, never, never ask me."

In spite of himself, the insistent thought had grown upon him that there was something here being withheld from him—an evidence of lack of trust that wounded him deeply. Weighted with such an unpleasant thought he had been riding to the McIntyre home in hope of securing an explanation that would dissipate his uneasiness, when he happened upon Allan and Flora alone in a secluded spot and had been a witness of McNab's departure and Flora's emotion.

To find the woman who, with tears and rapturous kisses, had pledged to him her troth alone with the man whom she had every reason to fear and distrust, and he, to

hate—to find her affected to tears, as Allan in leaving had pressed her hand to his lips, seemed corroborative evidence of the strongest kind. Flora's subsequent embarrassment and her refusal to explain the incident of the destroyed note had set his soul on fire with jealousy.

Proud and sensitive man as he was, yet even the caution and reticence that goes with Scottish blood was no proof against his indignation, when amazed almost beyond words he listened to the woman he loved admit McNab's visit to her home, and defending his good intentions. And her sudden anger and breaking of the engagement had driven him to the conclusion that his worst fears were only too true, that in his absence the son of the Laird either by threats, or cajolery, had gone far in winning his way to the favour of the girl for whom he had striven and suffered during the last four months. That the woman whose courage, loyalty and steadfastness had awakened an admiration that had ripened into love was after all so weak, so uncertain that the pressure of events or the honeyed words of a scoundrel could lure her from her fealty filled his heart with unexpressible bitterness.

But sternly he had put aside his own private grief and given his mind to the work in hand—work into which he was throwing all his strength. For ten days now the Commissioner of the Governor, Mr. Francis Allen, had been in the grant, and Craig was acting as his guide and amanuensis. His word given to the clansmen that he would stand by them till the end still held him here. Aside from that he was but human, and his deep personal rancour against both Allan Dhu and the Laird could only be satiated by their utter defeat.

The Laird, well aware of the presence of Allen in the grant and the purport of his mission, had sent to the Commissioner who made his headquarters at Hilyard's inn in the village more than one cordial invitation to accept the hospitality of Kennell Lodge, communications which the Commissioner had as courteously refused.

Day after day Mr. Allen, accompanied by Craig, rode

about the grant interviewing the settlers. Many who had hitherto held back, now that the Government had taken a hand, openly aligned themselves with the complainants. The Commissioner, accompanied by Craig, talked with them at their firesides, sought them out in their clearings and listened to the story of their wrongs.

On one occasion only had Craig begged to be excused from accompanying Allen and had delegated Murty McGonigal instead, a suggestion to which the smith had agreed but not without a muttered exclamation of amazement. He had stared long and thoughtfully at Craig, then as he broke into a broad grin of comprehension, readily consented. From Flora McIntyre, the Commissioner had learned of the long persecution of her father, the arrest and farcical trial of Peter, a recital which was later amply corroborated by the testimony of Alex Miller, who had recently returned from the States.

To rumours and mere hearsay evidence Mr. Allen refused to listen. Each and every person interviewed was required to sign an affidavit in the presence of witnesses. John Paris told him in detail of the stopping of the water on the Waba Creek, and many who had themselves paid their own way out from the old land, were positive in their statements that they had been obliged to take leases for their land and to pay the Chief rent, "one bushel of grain per cleared acre to me and my successors in the chieftaincy of the Clan McNab forever."

But Commissioner Allen was a strangely non-committal man. Not a quiver of his sharp eye, nor the least change in his scholarly, intellectual face, showed that he was in the slightest degree affected by their pathetic recitals. And no amount of deft questioning as to the nature of his report could elicit anything from his firm, thin lips, but a dry smile and an evasive answer. Superficially courteous, he was yet the personification of dignity and reticence.

As Commissioner Allen and Craig rode up one morning to the door of Hans Schubrink's grog shop, Duncan

Cameron strolled leisurely out on the stoop. After greeting Craig pleasantly, he stood filling his pipe, meanwhile glancing appraisingly at Allen, who sat stiffly in his saddle while Craig plied Duncan with questions concerning a road to one of the more remote sections of the grant.

With the coming of warmer weather Duncan had again donned kilts and sporran, and though his sturdy figure, attired in the scarlet check of the Lochiel Camerons, was not lacking in dignity, his flushed face and trembling fingers as he whittled at his tobacco plug told that he had not only "had his morning" but several of them.

As Allen's gaze swept Duncan's figure, a slight trace of amusement crept into his face as he noted Cameron's somewhat pompous aspect and the faded gaudiness of his garb. Duncan, engaged in answering Craig's questions, suddenly detected the man's hidden amusement, and his eye glittered ominously. He turned to Allen.

"Since, ye're fashin' yersal about the affairs o' the grant, why do ye no ax o' the Laird to show ye his deed to the town-ship. If he does, I'll buy ye a drink.

"Aye, aye," he continued sneeringly, "I'll do more than that. I'll make it a whole skinful—and Glenlivet at that."

"Have you any complaint to make against the Laird?" enquired Allen formally.

"Complaint, is it? That I hae. Did I no come out wi' him from Scotland, and was it no masel who laid the first logs for Kennell Lodge? And he put me, Duncan Cameron, who hae kenned him, as man and lad for forty year, out o' his house for naught but a wee bit o' a joke."

"You hold land of the Laird, I presume?" queried Allen. He lifted the reins from the horse's neck as if anxious to conclude the unprofitable interview.

"Noo, what the De'il," burst out Duncan impatiently, "would a Scottish gentleman like masel be doin' wi' a wee bit clearin'? I'm no fashin' my head about farm work." Then as his irritation overmastered him, he snapped:

"If ye would ken the truth about the Laird and the grant, 'tis masel ye'll hae to be crackin' wi'."

Allen's high-bred countenance showed his displeasure. The man, he perceived, was under the influence of liquor and in a quarrelsome mood. He seemed to have some sort of a personal grievance against the Laird and with that, as commissioner, he had no concern whatever.

"If you have any complaint against the Laird concerning a land holding," said Allen coldly, "I will be glad to take your deposition at any time. For the next three days you will find me at Hilyard's inn. I bid ye good day, sir." He rode off followed by Barclay Craig, who was somewhat amused by the sudden antagonism between the two men.

Cameron, his face red with anger, stood staring after them, for a minute.

"And he thinks," he muttered darkly, "that I wull be chasing off after a 'whup my denty' like yon. Feigs, if he wants to find out what I ken, he must come to me. I was minded to give it to him, but noo he must ax it o' masel first."

CHAPTER XXVII

A DESPERATE RESOLVE

BARCLAY CRAIG, seated alone in his room in Hil-yard's inn, laid down his pen and sighed wearily.

His work in the grant was ended; on the morrow he was to leave for Kingston, where Hincks, now in high favour with the new reform administration of Lord Sydenham, had assured him of a lucrative position in the Crown Lands department. Already his belongings strapped and bundled lay about him on the floor.

Hour by hour for the last three weeks he had striven to put away from him all memory of Flora McIntyre, but in vain. The thought of her came to him with every nodding leaf and blossoming flower. Her eyes spoke to him in the blue of the summer sky, and her voice in the song of the mounting lark. The unspeakable sadness of the man's face told of his heartache and heaviness of soul.

Thoughtfully he read the letter he had just written, a letter containing neither regrets nor apologies, but bidding her a kindly farewell and expressing his good wishes for her future happiness. As the missive dropped from his fingers to the table his eyes, fixed on space, saw her clear-limned in memory, as with heightened colour and snapping eyes she had uttered the words that had brought his castle of dreams to crumbling ruin.

Was it all done with now, this joyous vision, so sweet in its living, so poignant in the bitterness of its passing? All those weary months in his prison cell it had been with him, a tower of strength and comfort against the insidious whisperings of despair. It had become interwoven with the very fabric of the man's soul and now, even after many

days of estrangement, he was unable to picture a future without its glowing inspiration.

Another picture rose before him: that of the Flora, tender and yielding, who had blushing pressed her lips to his in sweet surrender and sent him forth with her love and her blessing to do battle for her kinsmen.

Within him rose a wave of stubborn incredulity. It could not be. An unreasoning prophetic intuition, telling him that this shadow, now darkening his life, was but a dream that must pass—that the other was real—that all would come right—he would make it come right—had him in its grip. Springing to his feet, he contemptuously tore the letter to shreds.

To submit to the sudden, hasty words of an angry woman was folly,—a written communication was childish. He would ride this very night and speak with her face to face. Upon a slender thread indeed hung all his hopes, yet he would not leave the grant till that had been tried and tested to the utmost.

As he passed down the hall of the inn, he came to a sudden halt. In the large, bare lounging room to the left a strident voice was holding forth to a score of listeners.

"It's masel that thinks the Laird has gone clean daft. Early this morning wi' Madigan's posse, he rode to John Campbell's house and put him, his bairns and his gear out on the roadside. And this afternoon he served Sandy McDairmid and his wimmin folk the same way."

"But my God," cried an incredulous voice, "John and Sandy hae paid their rent. That I ken masel."

"'Tis no for the rent—'tis for the bonds given for the passage money from Scotland. 'Tis for this that the Laird has a legal paper from the court giving him power to put them out. He says he's sure that Sandy and John hae been ridin' wi' the Black Boys."

"But 'tis no time—the ten years are no up yet. John came out in twenty-nine and Sandy the year after."

"De'il a haporth does the Laird care for a wee bit thing like that. Feigs, I'm thinkin' there wull be sore work

afore sunrise. The Laird and the posse hae gone to Lochwinnoch but they wull no be the only armed men riding the grant this night, or I miss my guess."

"Not the only armed men—sore work afore sunrise." Craig stood alone in the dimly lighted hall, the words ringing in his brain. It could mean but one thing, that the Black Boys were contemplating resistance to the Laird's posse.

He glanced at his watch. It was later than he thought; the hands were nearing nine o'clock. His interview with Flora must wait till to-morrow night; here was a matter that demanded instant attention.

But one man was there in all the grant who would be in possession of the actual facts, and whose influence if he could enlist it on the side of peace would be strong enough to avert the impending conflict—Murty McGonigal—the smith. For if the hot-headed and intrepid youngsters driven to desperation by the events of the day came into contact with the posse, either intentionally or by accident, no power on earth could prevent bloodshed.

As Craig's horse mounted the crest of the hill above the village, a black-visaged rider dashed by him with head held low, and half a mile further on as he passed a cross road, he glanced back to see two others swing into the main road and race furiously towards Arnprior. The man's tale was no idle rumour. From far and near the Black Boys were gathering; the affairs of the grant were close to a crisis that might terminate in tragedy.

Anxious and troubled, he thundered with his riding whip at McGonigal's door. But the smokeless chimney, the unlighted windows, told him that the occupants were absent. Both, he surmised, had already ridden to the rendezvous at Blaisdell's Bay.

For a space he sat in his saddle pondering the question. Less than an hour ago he had dreamed that his connection with the clansmen and their troubles was at an end, but now he was confronted by a situation where to remain silent and inactive would be almost criminal. At this

juncture, when Commissioner Allen's report was daily expected, conflict with the Chief's legally organised posse would prejudice the authorities against every contention of the clansmen. Whatever enormities the Laird might commit, it would be madness for them to ruin their only chance of relief by some rash act. It might mean their total defeat,—might result in the tightening of the feudal bonds they had learned to hate so bitterly.

He was well aware that the successful result of his mission to Montreal had placed him high in the estimation of the clansmen, and he believed that if he could secure the support of McGonigal their joint efforts would be sufficient to swerve the lads from their purpose.

An hour later, unhindered and unexpected, he rode into the open space in front of the log cabin, into which one winter night, six months ago, he had been led, bound and blindfolded. But now as he slipped from his horse his appearance was greeted by an unanimous shout of welcome.

"The Surveyor—he's wi' us—good man."

Craig glanced swiftly about him, and his face darkened with dismay. Each and every man carried a gun in the hollow of his arm and in their faces, now innocent of any disguise, was a sullen desperation that warned him his task would be no easy one.

"My God, men," he cried, as they pressed about him with outstretched hands, "what do you here with guns? Do you wish to lose all that you have gained—all that you have striven for in the last three years? Would you ruin all your chances of success by open opposition to the representatives of the law? Already has there been too much of this. The Governor himself said as much to me. You are only providing the Chief with arguments, as forcible as they are true, to use against you. Have patience. Let the Laird have his way for a while. In a few weeks, at most, Commissioner Allen's report——"

"Mr. Craig," interrupted Stewart, "I'm thinkin' ye hae no heard o' Commissioner Allen's letter to Duncan McNab.

"Tis the same auld tale," he quoted scornfully. "'The report when completed wull be referred to the proper authority, and wull be acted upon in due time, after the union o' the two provinces is completed.' 'Twull take, no days, but weeks, perhaps months. Judging by what we hae seen the day, if we wait longer, the most o' us wullna hae a roof above our heads afore that.'"

"Where is Murty McGonigal?" asked Craig. He believed somehow that the Irishman would not be one to consent to the mad venture. Long ago he had divined that under the smith's seeming recklessness lay a hidden vein of caution. But no one knew anything of Murty's whereabouts. Several had ridden to notify him, and all reported that his cabin was empty.

"Mr. Craig," said the voice of John Campbell, who had been evicted early in the morning, "there's no a man in the grant that the Laird canna serve as hae done me the day, and wi' no more reason. If they wait another week, they may be in my own case—hae no homes at all to defend. They would be fools if they didna fight till the last drop o' their blood."

"And ye hae no heered that MacTavish tellt Roddy ten days ago that the Laird has sellt the grant and that we are all to be put off," remarked another voice. "Man, man, we canna give up the bit homes we hae built wi' our own hands and the bit clearings we hae sweated to make for our bairns."

"Aye, Sandy," called several. "Your talkin' the noo."

Stewart again took up the argument. "We're no afeerd o' the Laird's posse," he remarked contemptuously. "They willna fight. 'Tis much safer work puttin' folk out o' their homes than facing men wi' guns. Ye'll see they'll run like scared rabbits, so fast ye canna see their heels for dust. The night, they be drinkin' late at Sand Point on their way home from Lochwinnoch and afore they reach Arnprior, we wull lie in wait for them, take their guns away and ride them out o' the grant. We hae no doubt o' your friend-

liness, Mr. Craig, but ye may as weel hold your tongue, for ye canna stop us," he concluded bluntly.

Craig was about to speak, when a crackling in the underbrush attracted their attention. Some one was approaching. Several seized their guns and stared apprehensively in the direction of the sound.

A horseman emerged from the obscurity. Unheeding the guns that were pointed full upon him, he dismounted, and walked deliberately towards the fire. As its radiance illumined his tall figure, broad shoulders and sombre countenance, the guns were slowly lowered and gasps of astonishment came from the men about the fire.

It was John Mohr McIntyre.

"In God's name, John Mohr," exclaimed Stewart. "How did ye get out? I thought ye had seven months more to sarve."

"I dinna ken any more than yersals," answered McIntyre, slowly, as he grasped their welcoming hands. "The sheriff came to the door and said: 'Ye can gang home noo, McIntyre,' and certain ye may be," he added dryly, "that I was no stopping to speir o' him for reasons."

"And what hae ye on the night, lads?" he questioned, as he noted the fowling pieces and the restless horses tied to the trees about. "The lass tellt me a bit about it."

One after another joined in telling him the events of the last two months—the visit of Commissioner Allen, the libel suit of Hincks—the forming of the Laird's posse, and the eviction of Campbell and McDairmid.

"And this night," concluded Alec Stewart, "we plan to put an end to the posse and its work. There wull no be another clansman set by the roadside. We wull do it wi'out a fight if we can but if fighting must come, let the toughest hide hang it out the longest."

McIntyre shook his head. "Na, na, lads," he said slowly, "it wullna do, at all, at all. 'Twull"—suddenly his eye lit on Craig, who, standing apart, had taken no part in the conversation.

"Who's yon man?" he asked. Then, as startled recog-

niton flashed into his face, "is he no the Laird's surveyor?"

"Aye," responded Stewart, with a smile. "'Tis he. 'Tis the same man, John Mohr, that tried to lay a road across your land, and the same man that carried our petition to the Governor and got himsal in jail four months for the sake o' the folk o' the grant."

"Aye, I recall noo—the lassie writ me all about it. I am pleased to meet ye agin, under more favourable conditions, Mr. Craig," he said with a semi-humorous smile.

"Your pleasure is no less than mine," returned Craig. "I am glad you came; I have been trying to impress on our friends here the folly of armed resistance to the Laird."

"Aye, lads," resumed McIntyre, turning to the others, "ye had best gang home to your beds. Let the Laird gang his own gait and he'll e'en hang himsal. I'm thinkin' he's noo most at the end o' his tether. Give it up, lads. Force is no way to right wrongs these days."

"It be, John Mohr McIntyre," came a shrill voice from the background. "It be the only way."

A fierce-eyed man of middle age elbowed his way through the throng and thrust himself in front of McIntyre.

"This verra night we must strike; if we wait longer, we wull hae waited too long."

It was Alex Miller, the man who the Laird had driven from the grant three years before, and as he spoke his gimlet-like eyes snapped with excitement. Sharp of chin and nose, his slight figure moved with weasel-like alertness. He made a striking and impressive figure, as with impassioned and high-pitched voice he poured forth his hatred of years.

"Kinsmen and brothers," he began. "Since leavin' the grant I hae been abroad in the states, in Michigan and Ohio. I hae worked and lived side by side wi' men of all nations, there in the woods ayont the lakes, and I'm telling ye the noo that there's no one man o' them all would stand for a single month the things that ye hae for these many a year. Yankees, Frenchmen, Germans, men o' all races and nations, when I tellt them my tale, they hae

laughed us and our Chief to scorn. Aye," he almost shrieked, "they hae broke their mirth on us and our ways—on us Scotchmen as spiritless cowards."

A depressing silence followed. The listening men moved uneasily and their faces darkened. Then the stillness was broken by muttered curses and a defiant voice rang out:

"I believe ye, Alex Miller—and 'tis na wonder."

"Had they a Laird o' McNab ayont the lakes in the clearings by the Maumee or Saginaw Bay, long syne they would hae hanged him to a tree. And more than once has it been done. I saw masel one shanty boss, who would hae run away wi' the earnings o' the lads in our shanty, sent swiftly to his death. And 'twas no murder. They give him a fair enough trial, wi' a man to defend him, found him guilty, and executed him on the spot. They call it 'lynch' law o'er there, and many a time it does its work better far than the law o' the land."

"And 'tis nothing new, brothers. Didna the men o' the past try King Charlie and send him to the block? And didna the Frenchmen cut the head off their own King? And where is the man wull say that we canna do as we wull wi' our own Chief? De'il a hand was raised to punish the men who sent the thievin' shanty boss to his just desert, and when they hear the tale of our wrongs, where'ull ye find a jury in the Canadas wull find us guilty?"

He held his clenched fists high above his head and his almost hysterical tones echoed through the dark encircling woods.

"If ye would hae justice ye must take it yersals. Hae ye no had warnin' enough? Wull ye wait till he has treated ye all as he has treated masel? Five years syne," his voice faltered, "I had a wife and a home, and noo my wife lies in her grave wi' a broken heart, and my bairns are livin' by the charity o' friends."

"Would ye gang and shoot, mebbe one—or two o' the posse, poor de'ils like yersals, who be tryin' to earn a day's pay and let gang free the auld De'il who is responsible for all your woes?"

He leaped to a rock and threw both hands high above his head. The firelight illumined his gaunt fanatical face now quivering with passion.

"If ye no strike at the Laird himsal, ye wull prove yersals but the fools they name ye ayont the Lakes. Let us ride this night to Kennell and if the McNab is there, drag him from his own hearthstone, give him a fair trial afore a jury o' his own kin, and execute him on the spot. Noo, who will ride wi' me to do justice on the Chief of the Clan McNab? I hae by far the longest account wi' him and if ye find him guilty, as ye wull, I masel wull pull the rope that wull end his de'il's work."

An unanimous shout of assent was the answer. Miller had won. His fiery appeal had swept away their last trace of Scottish caution.

From McIntyre and Barclay Craig came loud futile words of protest as unheeding the boys scrambled to their horses and scampered off into the darkness. The two men found themselves alone.

Craig sprang to his saddle.

"We must ride with them, Mr. McIntyre. At the very last moment they may be induced to listen to reason."

"Aye," responded John Mohr, as he followed Craig's example. "We canna give up. The fool lads, I fear they wull do the night that which wull bring only more woe on the grant."

In five minutes they had rejoined the column now galloping steadily towards Arnprior.

The first of the houses were not yet reached when from far up the Dochart in their rear sounded two musket shots in swift succession.

Miller, riding at the head of the cavalcade, held up a warning hand. Quickly the others gathered about him.

Again the moonlit night echoed to a scattering volley.

"'Tis at Duncan Cameron's cabin," yelled Stewart. "The posse has stopped there on their road home from Sand Point. They be putting Duncan out, and he's giving them a fight."

Miller raised himself in his stirrups.

"Load your guns wi' a light charge of powder and a half-dozen buckshot," he ordered. "If the Laird's wi' them, we can kill two birds wi' one stone, take the McNab, and rid the grant o' the wretches."

The ramrods clattered in the musket barrels. Then with a simultaneous yell, they turned and galloped towards the scene of the conflict.

"I would give much," sighed McIntyre to Craig, who rode at his side, "to ken the ending o' this night's work. I am sore afraid there'll be blood spilled afore 'tis o'er wi'."

Craig made no answer. His heart was heavy within him. He had determined to make at the last moment an effort to dissuade the Black Boys from carrying out Miller's suggestion in regard to the Chief. Burdened, as he had been for the past month by heartache and vain regrets, it had always been a crumb of comfort to him that the affairs of the grant were at last on a fair way to a just and equitable solution. But now even that had vanished. All his efforts were to be set at naught by a defiance of the law and an act of revenge that would arouse the indignation of the whole country against the clansmen.

And neither dreamed, as with creak of saddle and clatter of hoof they galloped through the starlit night, that they were riding to that which would bring about the fall of the house of Kennell and the beginning of a better day for the people of the grant.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CAMERON SPEAKS

THE Laird does no own the grant at all. 'Tis the truth I'm tellin' ye," insisted Duncan Cameron, as he drew the wooden peg from the keg and filled his glass with white whiskey.

Murty McGonigal, seated with Narcisse on the other side of the table, took his clay pipe from his mouth, emitted a slow streak of smoke, then his face wreathed in an incredulous grin.

"Whist, Duncan, whist," he scoffed. "Yer tongue wags at both ends when ye are in dhrink."

In fact all three were bubbling over with the good-humoured loquacity of semi-intoxication. The night before Cameron had stolen a keg of the Chief's best whiskey from his warehouse, and conveyed it to his cabin by the Dochart. Meeting Murty and Narcisse who were abroad gathering up their spring traps, he had informed them of his exploit and invited them to sample the liquor.

"But 'tis so—'tis so," Duncan nodded, with ponderous gravity. He leaned over the table and spoke in a low whisper.

"De'il a foot o' land does the McNab own outright, but his own ground about Kennell Lodge. He's naught but an agent like Elliott o' Lanark and Herrick o' Fitzroy. Wi' my own eyes hae I seen the government paper that tells it."

"Mebbe," teased Narcisse, "Monsieur Cameron have him dat papaire in his pocket. Me, I would like to set on it ma eyes."

"Yes, Duncan," jeered Murty, "let's clap our peepers an it. Do ye be havin' it with ye?"

Cameron pursed his lips and wrinkled his brows with owl-like wisdom.

"Weel," he fenced. "That, noo, is as it may be. I'm no tellin' the night whether I hae it or no."

McGonigal put down his glass and eyed Duncan speculatively. Cameron's many obscure hints concerning the Laird's lack of title to the grant he had always set down as an amusing idiosyncrasy of intoxication, or to the old Highlandman's desire to encourage the opposition to the Chief. But never before had he known the canny old fellow to make such a positive, definite statement.

"A few more drinks," he whispered to Narcisse, "and the ould codger will be after tellin' us the sthory av his life."

"Dhrink hearty, Duncan," he invited, as he replenished Cameron's glass. "'Tis at the Laird's ixpinse, and don't be so close-mouthed with your information when ye're with friends."

"Ye'll give me your word," queried Cameron, "that ye'll keep the tale beneath your own bonnets? 'Tis no just the time yet for it to come out."

"'Twas this way," he began, when the others had pledged themselves. "The first night the surveyor came to Kennell—the night the Laird put me out, I——"

His words were smothered by a pounding on the door and a loud call:

"Halloo, there wi'in."

"Sacre Mon Dieu," exclaimed Narcisse in alarm. "'Tis de Chief."

"'Tis masel—open the door," commanded the deep voice of the Laird.

"Good evening, Chief," stuttered Duncan, as he walked unsteadily towards the door, "and what noo might ye be wantin' at this late hour?"

"Let me in the house, Duncan Cameron, or 'twull be the worse for ye," was the threatening answer.

"Na, na, Laird," returned Duncan, as with one hand

against the door jamb he teetered back and forth. "Tell your tale, Laird. We can clash just as weel through the boards."

"We must no let him come in," he said, in an aside to his two companions, "he'd see the whuskey."

"By Garrah," exclaimed Murty, "'tis that he's after. If onct he gets in, 'tis Perth jail for all av us." Quickly he lifted the keg from the table, placed it beneath a bunk and covered it with blankets.

"Ye wullna open, Duncan?" came from without.

"I wullna."

"Well, come out yersal till I crack wi' ye privately."

"I wull no do that either," returned Cameron. "Say your say, man, and then take yersal aff, for I'd hae ye ken," he explained grandiloquently, "that 'tis close to my hour for retirin'."

From Charbonneau, who between his hands had been peering through the window, came a startled cry.

"He have wit' him lots mens and horse."

"By Garrah," exclaimed Murty, as he joined Narcisse at the window, "'tis Madigan's posse."

"Duncan Cameron," the voice of the Chief held a rising note of anger, "if ye'll no come out and crack wi' me face to face, I wull riddle the cabin wi' bullets."

"But what is it you're wanting?" again queried Duncan.

"Ye ken well enough what I'm wantin'. MacTavish tellt ye of it two days syne. If I hae to force your door and take that paper from ye, ye'll gang to jail for your thievery. Hand it to me out the door and I'll give ye my word to fash ye no more."

"Millia murther," gasped Murty, as his startled eyes met those of Charbonneau. "Did ye hear that?"

He rushed to Cameron, caught him by both shoulders and with his face a few inches from the Scotchman's demanded in an intense whisper.

"Be your hope av Heaven, Duncan Cameron, is that paper what ye say it is?"

"Heugh," snorted Duncan, "did ye no hear me tellin' it? I'm no in the fashion o' lyin' to my friends."

"Holy Mother av Moses," muttered Murty, as his hands dropped to his sides, "'tis throe then. That's what the ould Tarrier is after—not the keg. Ye'll not be givin' it to him, Duncan," he pleaded.

"Dinna fret about that, Murty," returned Duncan. "He'll no get it."

"I hae no got your paper, Laird o' McNab," he called, in a louder tone. "So ye can take yersal and your men home."

The three standing together, listening attentively, could hear low whispers outside the door.

"Be there any one wi' ye, Duncan?" asked the Laird.

"I'm here—McGonigal," answered Murty. "The top av the avenin' to ye, Chief."

Again they stood in silence, listening to the sound of the animated discussion without. The presence of others beside Duncan in the cabin had evidently not been expected.

"Noo, McGonigal," explained the Chief, "Duncan Cameron has a valuable document o' mine, and I hae called on him to give it up and he wullna. Noo, I command ye to put him out the door and if ye wullna, I'll hold ye equally responsible wi' him."

With a crafty grin Murty stepped close to the door and enquired amiably:

"And be Garrah, Laird, what might that same paper be?"

"That," snapped the Chief, "is none o' your affair. Put Duncan out the door, McGonigal, and ye'll no be implicated. If ye dinna, I'll fire the roof above your heads and smoke ye out like a lot o' rats."

From the Irishman's throat burst a Jovian yell of defiant indignation.

"W-O-O-W. Ye will now, will ye? Thry it, ye damned ould divil, and we'll fight ye till Hell freezes over. Get away from that dure or I'll let daylight through you with a chunk av lead."

There was no reply but hurrying footsteps told that his command had been obeyed. Murty turned to Charbonneau.

"Narcisse, me bye, 'tis lucky we had our guns with us this afternoon when we came up with Duncan. 'Tis takin' our lives in our hands, mebbe, but we can never let him get hold av Duncan. Wan way or the other he'd wiggle that paper out av him. 'Tis for the sake av the folk of the grant. Will we be givin' him a fight?—Are ye with me, bye?"

Charbonneau turned his dark eyes reproachfully on his friend.

"For why you ask dat? Wit' you, ma fren' Murty, I fight him de Devil himself."

"Put out the lights, pile high the fire," ordered McGonigal. "Duncan, get your bed ticks and stuff them in the windows. I'll be loadin' the guns."

In a moment the interior of the log cabin was in darkness, save for the glowing fire in the hearth. The guns loaded, McGonigal seized an axe standing in the corner and, with swinging blows, dislodged pieces of chinking from between the logs, breast high, on each side of the door.

"Duncan, you keep a lookout be the edge av that tick and tell us what they're doing. Don't shoot, Narcisse, till I give the word. Pepper their legs—the buckshot scatters well—sure we don't want to kill any one."

"They are coming," warned Duncan. "They hae a log wi' them."

"Now, Narcisse." The roar of Murty's musket filled the room. Like an echo came the report of Charbonneau's shotgun.

"They're runnin' away like the de'il himsal was after them," chuckled Cameron. "One lad is down, they're car-ryin' him."

A scattering volley of shots cut into the night. Above their heads they could hear the smashing of the shingles. The glass of the window panes fell tinkling to the ground.

"Don't get in front of that door, Narcisse," warned Murty

as a second later a bullet scattered the white splinters from the boards and whined into the opposite wall.

"They're coming ag'in," warned Cameron, peeping through his crevice.

"Give it to them, bye!" called Murty. Almost simultaneously their weapons spoke.

"Glory be!" he yelled, "wan av the horses is down. Quick! load them up ag'in."

Keyed high with intoxication and excitement, all three were in a reckless mood. As they reloaded the guns, Narcisse was whistling a bar of the "Marseillaise," Cameron was chuckling enjoyably to himself, while Murty was chanting:

"I'll take the shamrock from my hat
And cast it on the sod,
But 'twill take root and flourish there
Though underneath 'tis trod."

The fire had died down and its dim light hardly revealed the forms of the fighters moving amid the smoke-laden obscurity.

"I'm thinkin' they've got enough av it. Them lads have no stomach for facing buckshot for their two shillin' a day," commented Murty.

The silence was broken by Cameron's sudden warning:

"There's a lad runnin' from the corner o' the house."

"Runnin'—from where?"

"From the back."

"Hell and damnation!" cried Murty, "wan av them has sneaked around to the back and fired the cabin. See the light."

Above the low crackling sound in the rear they could hear the voice of the Chief, mandatory, expostulating.

"Dey are all on deir horse. Dey don't want to come again. De Chief he try mak' dem," commented Narcisse, his eye at the opening. "Yes, de're come now again."

"We give them wan more dose av buckshot," cried Murty, "and then I'll slip out meself and put out the fire. There's

a hole in the roof, in the back, if I raymimber right. Annyway, the logs is purty wet and won't burn quick."

Narcisse and Murty knelt at their openings, their guns at their shoulders. Duncan on his knees was peeping under an edge of the uplifted bed ticking.

A thundering volley shook the night. Again the shingles rattled on the roof, the ticking against the windows trembled but held its place. Without a sound, Cameron sank unnoticed in a heap on the floor.

The darkness without suddenly blossomed into a chorus of menacing shouts and angry yells.

"Now, what the divil——" began Murty.

The two staring through the openings saw a dark mass of horsemen dart out of the trees and charge like a whirlwind on the members of the posse. For a fleeting moment they glimpsed the rise and fall of gun-butts and the forms of struggling, mounted men. Then the *mêlée* dissolved, and past the corner of the cabin in a wild rout rode the Laird and his retainers.

"Glory be to all the Saints!" yelled Murty. "'Tis the Byes!"

Quickly Narcisse unbarred the door, and the Black Boys, headed by Miller, Craig and John Mohr McIntyre, came pouring into the cabin. The splash of water at the rear told that the fire was being extinguished.

"Be any o' ye hurt?" asked McIntyre.

"Divil a wan," answered Murty.

"Mon Dieu!—Mon Dieu!" cried Narcisse. "De poor Duncan, he is shot."

In the darkness of the cabin and the tense excitement of the last few moments, they had not noticed the crumpled form beneath the window sill.

Murty, his face anxious, gathered him up in his mighty arms and placed him on a bunk. The clansmen crowded about, their countenances filled with concern.

"He's kill sure," sobbed Narcisse. "Look at de head of him."

Cameron's face had taken on an ashen hue. From a spot

in his temple a red stream was slowly trickling; one side of his head was a mass of clotted blood.

"Mr. Craig, look at this," said Murty in a breaking voice. "I'm afraid the poor ould bye is done for. 'Tis a fine price the ould Tarrier will be payin' for this night's work, and by Garrah, if Duncan's kilt, the saycret av the paper has gone with him."

About him they gathered in an anxious, silent group. Narcisse held a candle close to the wounded man's head. From the breathless figure came no motion as Craig, bending close, touched Cameron's blood-dabbled locks enquiringly with his fingers.

In the pale face pillowed on a coat, one eye suddenly opened and blinked in the candle light, the other was closed and swollen. But in the open orb there was no sign of dissolution. Instead, it glared almost fiercely at the on-lookers.

"Noo, what the de'il," began Cameron, as he struggled to a sitting position, "hit me sic a dunt on the head? I thought the roof had fallen in on me. For what be ye standin' about staring at me like a lot o' gowks?"

The hearty laughter that greeted Duncan's outburst had in it a note of relief.

"It was a spent bullet—a short charge of powder possibly," Craig explained, as he examined Duncan's head more closely. "It struck his temple in a slanting direction, passed between the skull and the scalp and out at the back of his head. His scalp is badly torn. That is all."

"Scotchmen have hard heads, be Garrah—that's an ould sayin', but I never heard av wan before that could turn a bullet," commented McGonigál. "How the divil did ye get here in the nick av time?" he enquired of Craig.

Quickly they told the smith of the day's evictions and of their sudden determination to take personal vengeance on the Laird.

"Get out with ye," he replied. "Ye must be achin' to be fruit for the gallows tree. Now listen, lads, I have a bigger piece av news than that. Duncan here says——"

Cameron, his head bound up and seemingly but little the worse for his experience, interrupted him:

"Did the auld de'il put them out o' their homes? I would no hae thought it o' him. 'Tis all the doin' o' MacTavish."

"'Tis a grateful son-av-a-gun ye are, Duncan," taunted Murty. "Him tryin' to burn ye out and shootin' ye in the head, and ye all the time protectin' him in his villainy, if that story av yours be thrue."

A lack of comprehension in their quiet gaze, the clansmen's glances wandered from McGonigal to Cameron, who with elbows on knees sat staring thoughtfully at the floor.

"My auld head feels fit to burst," groaned Duncan, "and it's no verra clear but I'll hold my peace no longer, e'en if I gang to jail for it. The Laird doesna' own the grant at all, and I masel hae seen the paper that wull prove it."

A quiet but scornful laugh greeted his statement.

"Tuts, Duncan," jeered Stewart. "'Tis no the first time we heered ye tell that fairy tale. Your head's whirlin' yet."

The remark seemed to sting Cameron to the quick.

"I'll tell the whole tale. It all begin the first night that Mr. Craig came to Kennell, the night the Laird put me out o' the Lodge. I was far gone in drink and I thought 'twould be a good joke on MacTavish to carry away some o' his papers and make trouble for him wi' the Laird. Ye wull remember, Mr. Craig, when the auld warlock's table upset?"

Craig nodded.

"Noo, one o' they letters was no more nor less than a letter axin' o' the Governor would he give to the Laird a grant-deed to the township, so that the Chief could make out deeds to the settlers, and the other was a letter from the Governor saying that he would no do it. Noo, why the de'il, sez I to masel, should the Laird ax for a deed to his own lands?"

"'Twas the night o' the first deep snow, I went to Ken-

nell on snow-shoes and wi' an auld key I got into the Chief's office and found what I was lookin' for. Then I had the mischance to knock o'er a chair and got away only by the skin o' my teeth by loupin' through the window, just as Mr. Craig and McCuan came runnin' into the room."

"This is all true," said Craig. "It was the night I first met you gentlemen in the cabin by Blaisdell's Bay," he added, with a quiet smile.

"And that paper," Cameron announced triumphantly, "says the grant was given only temporarily to the Laird for the purpose o' gettin' it settled."

"In God's name," exclaimed Alex Stewart, thrusting himself through the crowd gathered about Duncan, "if that tale be true, why did ye no give it to Commissioner Allen?"

"Heugh," snorted Duncan. "I'd no trust it wi' that whup-my-denty. He's hand in glove wi' the rascals at the capital and no good will come to the grant from him."

"But, Duncan," queried Craig, "how can this be true? There must be other duplicate documents at York that would disprove any such false claim by the Laird."

"Claim—claim," snorted Duncan. "Did any o' ye ever hear him claim that the grant was his own personal property? I hae never."

"No need would there ever hae been o' that," remarked John McIntyre. "Ne'er a doubt has there been in any clansman's mind since the first came to the grant but that the Laird was the owner."

"Weel, 'tis truth I hae tellt ye. Two days ago, Mac-Tavish came to me and tellt me that the Laird kenned I had the paper and threatened me wi' jail."

"But, Duncan—Duncan," protested McGonigal, "for the love av Heaven, don't keep us waiting anny longer. Get the paper and let us have a look at it."

"Hold a bit, ye wild Irishman," retorted Cameron. "Who's tellin' this tale? When I kenned the Laird was after it, it came to me that there was one safe place where he'd no look for it. Big Thunder across the lake was

aye a good friend o' mine, and I give it to him to keep for me. He's got it the noo."

As he spoke Duncan's face had been slowly paling. The liquor he had drunk, the excitement of the evening and the loss of blood had been a severe strain on a man of his years.

"I dinna feel very weel. I must lie down," he murmured, as he sank to the pillow. Murty covered him with a blanket.

"Mr. McIntyre," said Craig, "this seems incredible."

"It does that," returned John Mohr, "but it is weel worth investigation. Some one should gang across the lake and get that paper this very night. Duncan's in no condition to gang."

"Mr. Craig," suggested Narcisse, "'tis de bes' dat you go. It was you dat pull him Big Thunder's boy out of de rivaire las' fall. I t'ink he do w'at you say."

"Ye'll no find the Injuns there, I'm thinkin'," put in Stewart. "Big Thunder tellt me a week ago that he looked to gang north to a new home in a few days."

"Yis, you're the man for the job, Mr. Craig," agreed Murty. "There's not a whisper av wind out. I've seen ye meself more than onct in the Chief's birch bark, and ye can handle the crazy craft mighty well. Ye'll find me own canoe under the wharf. Most of the boys here are worryin' to get home to their women that are be this time frettin' about them. And ye betther go alone, for seein' the claim ye have on Big Thunder, ye can do more with him than anny wan else. I don't belave they're gone yet and ye may catch thim afore they start."

Craig rose to his feet. "Yes, I will go," he said quietly, "and if I succeed in getting the document, we can all meet to-morrow noon at your cabin, Murty."

As the clatter of the hoofbeats died away, McGonigal sat for a while in silence, a thoughtful smile on his generous mouth. Then he turned to Charbonneau.

"Narcisse, me bye," he said slowly, "Mr. Craig is a man after me own heart. From the minute he told us that day

at Sand Point that he was with us, divil a sign av flinching. He's not like most Scotchmen—he doesn't need a year to make up his mind. Did ye note, bye, how quick and quiet he said he'd go—and him, I'm thinkin', with a heartful av trouble av his own?

"In the ould days that wan reads about," he mused, "them days av swords and spears, when a bould heart and a strong arm led to fame and fortune, 'tis a fine king he would have made. Yis, he would that, with that straight upstanding head and them kind eyes that can harden in a holy jiffy and look ye over as if ye were a stone or a stump.

"Yis sir—yis sir." Murty's eyes brightened with the hero-worship of the Celt. "The marks av the rale quality are on that bye as plain—as plain, be Garrah, as the freckles on me own face."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DARK LADY

WITH a quick twist of the paddle, Barclay Craig swung the canoe sidewise to the wharf, stepped out on the slanting slip, drew the light craft out of the water, and hurried to the clump of poplars where he had left his horse.

Alex Stewart's prognostication had proven correct. Only naked wigwam poles and the ashes of long-dead fires now marked the site of the Indian village. Big Thunder and his band had already departed for their new home, up the Coulonge. To reach them now meant a journey of many days, an undertaking which he did not feel competent to attempt alone. He was on his way back to Cameron's cabin, where he hoped to induce either McGonigal or Charbonneau to accompany him on the expedition.

Slowly his horse climbed the winding path on the face of the hill and emerged on the level in front of the gate house, the home of Piper McNee. Suddenly he smothered an exclamation, swung his horse about and sat staring up the avenue toward Kennell Lodge. For a single instant he had seen clearly silhouetted against the starlit sky the figure of a woman. Then it had vanished into the blackness of the pines.

It was the same dark-clad figure that he had encountered in the hall of Kennell Lodge, and had later glimpsed through the window the first night he had spent in the home of the Laird. Vividly he recalled old Ian McCuan's trembling declaration that it was none other than the spectre of the McNabs—the "Dark Lady."

The gate lay open and the wide, well-kept avenue, smooth

and white in the moonlight, stretched invitingly before him. Overcome with curiosity, he slipped from his horse and ran swiftly along the gravelled walk. But as he neared the spot where the apparition had vanished, the loud bay-ing of dogs, close at hand amid the trees, filled the night.

A woman's figure tottered out of the shadows and, with gasping breath, stumbled weakly towards the gate. Close upon her heels plunged two great hounds. A moment more and they would have dragged her to the ground had not several vigorous kicks from Craig's boot sent them yelping up the avenue.

He hurried towards the entrance. At first his searching gaze showed him no sign of the woman. Then a low moan of pain struck his ear; she was standing in the mooncast shadow of the gate house, one hand on her breast, the other at her brow. Suddenly she lurched forward, staggered and fell prone on the doorstep.

Before Craig could reach her side the opened door revealed the figure of Mrs. McNee, the wife of the piper.

"My God!" she whimpered, as she bent over the prostrate figure. "I thought her safe in bed. More than once I hae tellt her 'twould come to this."

Wonderingly the surveyor lifted the frail form in his arms, bore her within and placed her on a cot. As the light of the candle in Mrs. McNee's hand illumined the white face on the pillow, he uttered an exclamation of amazement. He was gazing down into the lined and haggard features of Amelia Graham.

"I tellt her—I tellt her—more and once," repeated the wife of the piper as she hurriedly prepared a warming draft, "that some harm would come to her."

"But what—what——" Craig began.

Amelia opened her eyes and gazed slowly about the room. Then her eyes, unwontedly intelligent now, sought the man's face.

"'Tis the lassie's lad," she murmured, then her mouth twisted with a spasm of pain and she moaned miserably.

"'Tis her heart," sobbed Mrs. McNee. "It has no been strong this many a year. I'm sore afeered for her."

Craig placed his hand on Amelia's side and noted the faint and irregular pulsations. Amelia's life was slowly fading. Again she opened her eyes and, as Craig lifted her up to take the drink that Mrs. McNee held to her lips, they sought Craig's anxiously. As she spoke both bent close to hear.

"I ken it all noo," she said, almost reflectively. "Two Amelias—two Amelias and yet one—one the daft auld woman that had forgot all the past, and the other the Amelia that bore in her heart the sorrow o' the things that were. I can see him noo, the little bairn, wi' laughin' eyes and hair o' gold like his feyther. All these years I hae forgot—but at times—and then I longed for him."

Again Mrs. McNee pressed the cup to her lips. As it was withdrawn the dying woman's gaze again sought Craig's.

"Peter," she murmured, "Peter and Ellen, the two bairns." Her voice rose a little. "Tell them for me to no wait. I hae thought to see it masel but noo I will no be there. I'm gangin' to my last long home. Ye must tell them for me to no wait longer. To dare all the world and wed this verra night—in my house."

She attempted to raise herself; her voice rose in a longing cry as she reached her arms imploringly:

"My bairn—my bairn. Give him to me."

Then her form collapsed on the pillows, her figure twisted in one stern convulsion, and she lay still.

Amelia Graham was dead.

In stupefied silence Craig stood staring at the grey and silent face. No sound save the loud, insistent ticking of the clock and the piteous sobs of Mrs. McNee. Amelia's words to his mind had carried but little significance, save her earnest message for Peter and Ellen—that he felt had been entrusted to himself.

"Ye dinna understand, lad," said the wife of the piper, as she laid a sheet over the motionless figure.

"Years and years ago the woman there was a sweet-heart o' the Laird's. Little more than boy and girl were they and, though there came to her a bairn, they were never churched. The Laird would hae wed her had no his feyther whisked him off to France. The coming o' the bairn almost cost the lass her life, and later when it died—'twas at the full o' the moon—she went mad, and when after months she came to her senses, all memory o' her love and her sorrow had left her mind, leaving her but the odd and daft body ye ken her to be. But at times when the moon shone full 'twould return—the memory o' it all. At sic times she thought hersal a lass again, and in her half-mad mind there was but one wish—to see the Laird who, though none hae kenned it, has seen to it that the auld body didna want. Mostly when she was taken so she would come first to my house, and I could get her to bed till the fit had passed. But many's the time she slippit away to the Lodge and frightened McCuan and the others out o' their wits. They thought her the Dark Lady.

"'Twas that she meant—two Amelias—the one that forgot and the one that remembered. At times for hours the two souls wi'in her strove for mastery, and her door would be locked ag'in all the world but masel. Twice I hae seen her that way and, Mister Craig, 'twas a fearsome thing to see—like two evil spirits wrestling for the possession o' a human soul.

"Many's the time I hae taken her in from the terrace, and last winter, the night o' the first deep snow, she would hae taken her death o' cold had I no found her. Once afore she has been chased by the dogs, and it most killt her, and noo the poor body's gone. The Dark Lady wull walk no more in Kennell Lodge."

A step at the rear entrance caused her to start uneasily.

"'Tis Jeems, Mr. Craig; ye had better be gangin'. He kens ye are no friend o' the Laird and he would no be pleased to find ye here. I thank ye kindly for your assistance."

Craig mounted his horse and rode on, his soul saddened by the life tragedy so suddenly revealed to him. No more would the lads and lasses of the grant gather about the hearth of Amelia Graham for the Hallowe'en games. He recalled now the strange stories he had heard of the old woman, her seclusion at times from the world, the tale of the shanty teamster who had seen her face at the door, twisted in agony—the apparitions at Kennell Lodge, her rudely comfortable life without any apparent means of sustenance—stories fantastic in the telling, yet in the light of Mrs. McNee's revelations credible and comprehensible.

Truly, he meditated, it was a night of strange and stirring events. The gathering of the Black Boys, the mysterious return of McIntyre, Amelia dead and Cameron positive in his declaration that there was in existence a document that would prove beyond doubt that the Chief was not the owner of the grant.

As he swung out of the village on the road towards the Dochart, McGonigal rode out from beneath the shadow of a tree. He had been awaiting him.

"He's sleepin' like a baby. He'll be all right in a day or two," Murty said, in answer to the surveyor's enquiry in regard to Duncan. "Sure, a Scotchman's hard to kill, annyway."

He listened in amazement as Craig told him the story of Amelia's death and what he had learned of her history.

"Poor woman," murmured Murty. "The Heavens be her bed. Though 'tis little she needs anny wan's prayers. She's had her purgatory here and she rests this night with the saints av God.

"And now, Mr. Craig, we must lose no time. We must get that paper from Big Thunder and put it in the hands av Commissioner Allen before his rayport is made out. Peter McIntyre's the lad for the trip up the river. He knows the lake like a book, and he's at 'Amelia's now. Ye must start afore sunrise."

A quick gallop through the night, followed by an alarm

at Amelia's door that brought no response till Murty called :
" 'Tis me and the Surveyor."

The door was thrown open, revealing the placid face and golden hair of Ellen McPherson. As Craig and McGonigal entered, the Reverend George Freer and Peter McIntyre rose from the hearthside.

"Hae ye seen aught o' Amelia wi'out?" queried Ellen uneasily. "She has been hae'in one o' her strange fits all the day. I watched her close, but she slippit away in spite o' me. I'm thinkin' she's o'er to Dugald McNabs'."

"Amelia Graham lies dead at the home of Piper McNee," said Craig solemnly.

In silent sorrow they listened to his tale. Ellen sobbed behind her kerchief, while Murty told Freer and Peter of the other happenings of the night—the Laird's attack on the cabin, the wounding of Duncan, his story of the stolen document, and the necessity of obtaining possession of it as soon as possible.

"Pater, bye," he concluded, "ye have followed the drive more than wan spring down the Ottawa and ye know well how to look after yerself in the woods. There is no better man that Craig can take for a guide. In me cabin is enough bacon and floor for a two-weeks' trip. Ye must take it and start at onct. Ye can mebbe catch the Injuns afore they scatter for the blueberry pickin'."

Ellen McPherson crept close to Peter, slipped her hand into his, and turned her adoring eyes upward to her lover's face. At McGonigal's words her countenance darkened with foreboding. For her at least the last month, during which Peter had remained hidden at Amelia's home, had been a period of happiness unalloyed. Her father, believing that she was attending to Amelia during a spell of sickness, had paid scant attention to her many absences from home. And now the long hours of happiness with her lover were at an end. He was to start on a hazardous journey in a frail craft over a body of water famous for its sudden and furious storms. Her eyes welled with tears and she murmured fearfully:

"Must ye go, Peter, must ye go?"

McIntyre drew her to him and looked down fondly into her eyes as he stroked her hair.

"Aye, lass, 'tis for the folk. 'Tis the call o' duty, ye would no hae me fail. The trip is no so bad for a man who kens the lake and its ways."

"Weel spoken!" cried the clergyman. "Like a McIntyre."

Barclay Craig's heart ached at the sight of a happiness that awoke within him memories that must now be forgotten. Then his eyes softened and his bearded mouth moved in a gentle smile.

"Listen, folks," he said in Gaelic. "Before she passed away, Amelia gave me a message for you—for Peter and Ellen here."

All eyes were turned towards him expectantly.

"She bade me say to you this: 'Tell Peter and Ellen to dare all the world and wed this night.' She was sore grieved that she could not be present. 'Twas her dying wish that you wed in her house."

The girl hid her face in her lover's breast to hide its flaming colour. Peter, his eyes kindling, whispered softly in her ear.

"Glory be!" cried Murty. "A weddin', is it? Come, Pr'acher," he turned to Freer, "ye can dispinse with the banns, if ye will. Sure now——"

A rap at the door interrupted him. Craig opened it to admit Susie McDougall.

"I saw the light from my window as I was gangin' to bed. 'Tis o'er late. Is any one ill?" she questioned.

Murty sprang forward and drew her arm within his own. Then he pushed Peter and Ellen in front of him. All four stood facing the clergyman.

"We're all ready, Pr'acher. Susie an' meself will stand up with them."

The Minister's eyes twinkled, then after a moment's thought he said:

"The law gives me the power in an emergency to dispense wi' the banns, and I wull do it."

"Wurrah! wurrah!" exclaimed Murty suddenly. "What in the devil will we be doin' for a ring?"

Barclay Craig's face saddened as he drew from his pocket the circlet of gold that for a few short weeks had graced the hand of Flora McIntyre. It seemed as if he was taking a last farewell of all his hopes. Murty's quick glance sensed the misery in the man's eyes and he emitted a low whistle of comprehension.

Quickly and without ostentation the words were said that made Peter McIntyre and Ellen McPherson one for life.

"'Never a death without a wedding close on its heels,' is a sayin' in Galway," said Murty solemnly. "Sure, 'tis true enough," he philosophised. "'Tis that that makes the world go round." He turned to Peter:

"Ochone, bye. 'Tis a shameful thing to part a man from his wife of an hour. But, Pater, ye must be aff. I'd go meself, but sure some wan has to look after Duncan and watch the Ould Tarrier. And ye know the river betther than I do."

"Oh, Peter, Peter!" sobbed the girl, as she clung to her husband. "Take good care o' yersal. Ye must come back safe or I'll die—I'll die."

One last long embrace and Peter McIntyre, his head high, his eyes shining, passed out the door. As he did so Murty stepped quickly to Ellen's side.

"Now, mind colleen," he whispered, "do ye be takin' good care of that ring. The surveyor jest lent it to ye for what the Pr'acher calls an imargancy. Mr. Craig will be needin' it himself afore long or I'm a Dutchman."

A quick ride to Murty's cabin and before the first flush of morning light had whitened the eastern sky Barclay Craig and Peter McIntyre, equipped with supplies for a two-weeks' trip, were paddling northward through the moonlit night in pursuit of Big Thunder and his band.

CHAPTER XXX

A FALLEN ROOF TREE

TWO great iron kettles were bubbling noisily beneath the maples back of the McIntyre home.

Flora McIntyre, dressed in a faded calico gown, lifted a bucket brimming with brown liquid from the drip of a leaking vat and, stepping to the fire, poured the contents into one of the cauldrons. With Mrs. Duncan McNab, a neighbour, she was engaged in the homely task of boiling potash from the ashes of a log-heap fire.

"The lye is gettin' pale the noo. We be most done, lassie," remarked Mrs. McNab. "There wull be more than three pounds' worth o' potash in they two coolers."

The girl did not seem to hear her. She pushed her sun-bonnet back on her shoulders, and with a tired sigh seated herself on a stump, her pensive gaze lost in the far-reaching aisles of the forest.

She was thinking of the unexpected happenings of the last few days, of dear old Amelia Graham, now resting in her last long home in Inch Bhui, of Duncan Cameron's incredible tale of the stolen document, of her brother and Barclay Craig wandering somewhere in the wilderness of the upper river. Ten days had come and gone and as yet there was no word of their return.

Her mother was at last well on the road to recovery from the malarial fever that had held her to her bed during the winter months. Flora had left her this morning sitting up and full of confidence that in a few days she would be her old self again.

The release of John Mohr McIntyre was still a mystery. The morning after the attack on Cameron's cabin he had

left for York to give his testimony in the libel suit of the Laird against the *Examiner*. A letter from Hincks borne by a special messenger had assured him that as a summoned witness he would not be molested on account of his difference with the Laird. Thoughtfully the editor had enclosed a sum of money, more than necessary to defray the expenses of the journey. John Mohr had left several pounds with his daughter and she had at once sent a remittance to Barclay Craig, repaying him for the money he had furnished her the day of his return to the grant.

Uneventful had been the last ten days. Since the wounding of two of the posse in the attack on Cameron's cabin, the Laird had made no move against the settlers. Rumour had it that several of Madigan's force had deserted and that the others had refused to attempt any more evictions till their numbers were increased.

But, most of all, the thoughts of Flora McIntyre turned to Barclay Craig. Time had laid his softening hand on the anger which had mastered her proud heart at Craig's intimation that she had been "keeping tryst with Allan Dhu." For days afterwards she could not recall the scene without flaming in wrath at the injustice of the accusation. But since, many an hour of tearful midnight meditation had borne home to her the fact that, struggle as she might, her love for the man who was still serving her and her people was something that would not down.

Cooler counsel told her that the circumstances under which he had found her almost excused his conclusion that there was some measure of understanding between herself and the son of the Laird.

Only last night Murty McGonigal had ridden over to the McIntyres. Silently she had listened as the Irishman expressed his glowing admiration for the surveyor.

"He's a man, Miss Flora, if there ever was wan," Murty had said. "Divil a thing has he to gain—now—be takin' the fight av us poor folks an his own shoulters. 'Tis because the heart av him is noble."

As he spoke the smith's eyes had never left her face, and she had turned quickly aside to hide the tell-tale quiver of her lips. How much, she wondered, did Murty know?

As she sat lost in reverie, her fingers idly twisting the strings of her sunbonnet, she thrilled at the thought that, though bereft of all hope of her, there had been no faltering in the man's steady purpose. Still was he "her knight"—"her people's champion." How many other men, flouted and rejected as he had been, would—Craig's own words came back to her—"have taken to the road again"?

Well, perhaps to-day or to-morrow he and Peter would be back and surely—surely he would come to her before leaving the grant. And if he did not—for an instant her face shadowed at the possibility—she would send for him. Yes, if need be, she would humble herself.

Sane-nerved, healthy and wholesome, youthful optimism claimed her for its own. Suddenly and joyfully her clear soprano voice rang out:

"Maxwelton braes are bonnie
Where early falls the dew,
And 'twas there that——"

The song died on her lips. With a quick bird-like motion she turned her head towards the opening in the trees at the edge of the clearing. Mrs. McNab, ladle in hand, stood staring enquiringly in the same direction. The sound of voices drifted to them from the roadway.

Flora sprang to her feet and ran swiftly along the winding path towards the house. As she emerged into the open, her face, ever turned towards the roadway, filled with a sudden, vague alarm. Half-hidden by the building were a group of horsemen, among them the kilted figure of the Laird. A woman's sobbing rose above the murmur of their voices.

She raced about the corner of the house and stopped transfixed in amazement. Two of the men were carrying the furniture out of the McIntyre home and, under the di-

rection of MacTavish, were piling it in a heap beyond the road.

With a cry of mingled anger and consternation, Flora rushed over and threw her arms about her mother, who, seated in a rocking chair, was weeping bitterly.

Erect in his saddle, a few feet away, the Chief sat looking at the buildings, his brows knit in consideration of some knotty problem. MacTavish, staring at the two women, was licking his lips nervously.

"'Tis na good to greet, Mistress McIntyre," he remarked stepping his horse nearer. "'Tis the law. The Laird has a writ o' ejectionment."

The Chancellor was speaking the truth. Several years before, in the days when the grant was at peace, John Mohr McIntyre had contemplated an exchange of farms with one Fergus McNab. The necessary deeds had been drawn up and placed in the hands of the Laird, who had made no objection to the trade. Later, both Fergus McNab and McIntyre had agreed to abandon the proposed exchange and requested the Chief to destroy the deeds. The Laird had given Duncan Cameron, at that time in charge of much of the clerical work at Kennell Lodge, instructions to that effect, but Duncan with characteristic carelessness had neglected to do so.

Only a few days ago the Chancellor, in looking over some old papers, had discovered the deed signed by John Mohr giving to Fergus McNab a complete title to the McIntyre farm. Instantly there flashed upon him a method of reprisal against the McIntyres as ingenious as it was inhuman.

Fergus McNab was dead, but his son—also named Fergus—an illiterate, somewhat stupid fellow, and a sturdy supporter of the Chief—was summoned to the Lodge. Without even an enquiry as to its purport, he signed a deed granting to the Laird all his rights and title to the property of McIntyre.

Armed with these two documents, the deed of John Mohr to Fergus McNab, and the other showing a transfer of

the same property to the Laird, MacTavish had no difficulty in securing a writ authorising the Laird to eject the McIntyres.

"The house is clear," announced Lipsey, as he added the last chair to the heap of household goods.

"Get it o'er wi'," ordered MacTavish.

For once in his life, Lipsey hesitated to obey an order. His gaze wandered from the pile of furniture to Flora McIntyre, who with low, crooning words was attempting to comfort and sustain her mother. Then he looked enquiringly at the Chief.

The McNab stepped his horse closer to the Chancellor's and spoke a few protesting words. The latter's response in a tone so low that the now staring, apprehensive girl could not distinguish the words, was firm and argumentative.

"Laird," he was saying, "noo for the first time ye hae them in your grip, and if ye dinna do it ye'll regret it sore. John Mohr has got the best o' ye all along. He dodged your process-sarvers, and when ye did take his cattle none would buy them and ye could no get your bond money out o' them. When ye put him ahint the bars, he just up and walks out. And his rascally son here in the grant has been laughin' your posse to scorn and stirrin' up his friends to burn your buildings. I hae served ye, Chief, to the best o' my ability, but 'tis no use if ye'll no strike noo when ye hae the chance."

Still the Laird sat motionless in his saddle, his troubled gaze resting on Flora McIntyre and her mother. MacTavish, who had never forgotten or forgiven his own humiliation by Duncan Cameron beneath their roof, was determined that to-day his vengeance would be fully satisfied. He went on in a persistent whisper:

"What hae ye got for your clemency and mercy? Ye offered to make yon lass there the mistress o' Kennell Lodge, and John Mohr ordered ye from his house. In the kindness o' your heart ye would no press against McIntyre the criminal charge o' haein' deforced a magistrate

and he and his hae repaid it by arousing rebellion agin ye. Noo ye hae them in your power, and if ye no make an example o' them, ye wull fail in your duty to the clan and to yersal and give folk muckle reason to think ye a beaten man."

The appeal to the Laird's pride had its effect. He called Lipsey, bent over in his saddle and whispered a few words. The latter strode over to the men standing near the building. At his command they scattered into the woods, reappeared a moment later, with armfuls of dry branches, and piled them against one corner of the house.

The Chief slowly dismounted, struck a light and applied it to the heap. This was the vengeance of MacTavish. The home of John Mohr McIntyre was to be given to the flames.

Flora, who had been busy wrapping a blanket about her mother, turned her head as the crackle of the burning twigs caught her ear. For an instant she stared almost unbelievably at the scene—the Laird, a blazing brand in his hand, applying it to fresh spots in the brush heap, the stolid assistants, and MacTavish seated in his saddle regarding her malevolently. Her face whitened and she reached a supporting hand toward the rail fence.

In a rush the blood came back to her cheek, and her eyes glittered in desperation. She sprang towards the heap of household goods, threw open a chest and drew forth a heavy horse-pistol. Deliberately she drew back the hammer and tilted the weapon sidewise that the priming might fill the pan. Then, one hand on her hip, she steadied herself for the shot at the burly figure of the Laird.

But before she could pull the trigger Angus, who had been watching her curiously, wrenched the weapon from her grasp and smashed it on the topmost rail of the fence. Sobbing with rage and disappointment, the girl threw herself downward on a pile of bedding.

"Noo, Angus," ordered MacTavish, "set the barn."

Angus drew a brand from the fire, but paused to glance at the Laird, who nodded approvingly. Obediently he threw

open the barn door and cast the flaming fagot on the straw-strewn floor.

Flora McIntyre had risen to her feet. Her face was wet with tears, her hair dishevelled, but in her eyes was all the savage fierceness of the race of targe and claymore. Boldly she advanced till she stood face to face with the Chief.

"Laird of McNab," she cried, "to-day you have disgraced an honoured name. To-day you have done that which will cost you the loyalty of the last of your kinsmen—that which will make the memory of the Laird of McNab a thing of hate and loathing as long as grass grows and water runs. To-day you have ended forever——"

A woman's scream rent the air.

"My bairns!—my bairns!"

Mrs. McNab, unnoticed, had come out of the woods and with outstretched arms was rushing towards the barn.

Flora joined her cries to hers. In the intense excitement of the last few moments she had forgotten the two McNab children who, when she and Mrs. McNab left for the potash boiling, had been last seen playing near the barn door.

Two horsemen came galloping around the corner—Narcisse Charbonneau and Murty McGonigal.

At the sight of the burning buildings, the pile of furniture, Flora and her mother in tears, and Mrs. McNab struggling in the hands of the Chief's men, Murty vaulted from his horse. He rushed towards the group and, knocking them to right and left like ninepins, drew the woman from their grasp.

"My bairns!—my bairns!—in the barn!" she screamed.

Without a word the smith leaped towards the barn. The watchers saw him dive into the smoke-filled doorway and, after a moment's heart-breaking suspense, emerge with a screaming child in his arms.

He set the boy on the ground out of harm's way and again disappeared in the volleying smoke. Once as they waited they heard his choking call:

"Alastair!—Alastair!"

Then, one arm across his eyes and half covered with blazing straw, he tottered out, staggered a few steps, and fell with his unconscious burden at the feet of the Laird.

He had been barely in time. Frightened by the appearance of the strange horsemen, the youngest of the little ones had hidden himself beneath the straw. A few moments more and the revenge of the Chancellor would have culminated in tragedy.

Slowly Murty rose to his feet, and with his hat, which some one had handed to him, slapped at his smoking garments. His eyebrows were gone, his hands red and blistered, and one side of his bushy head of hair burned to a crisp.

Still gasping, he swallowed the drink of water Narcisse handed him, then as he dropped the gourd to the ground he turned his smoke-reddened eye full on the face of the Laird.

"Ye ould divil!" he yelled, with upraised fists—"ye ould divil! Bad as ye are, I never would have belaved it av ye if I hadn't seen it with me own two eyes. 'Tis this day's wurruk that will cook your goose forever in the grant.

"'Tis a hotter place than that in there," he pointed to the McIntyre home, where the roof-tree had just fallen in a spark-scattering crash. "'Tis a hotter place than that ye'll get for your portion in the wurruld to come, or there's no God in Heaven. Ye've damned your sowl to the lowest pit av Hell. But wan minute more and ye'd have been a murtherer as ye are now in your dirty heart, ye—ye—ye——"

Unable to find fitting words to vent his rage, the Irishman poured forth a torrent of vituperative profanity.

The McNab's face blanched with anger. In all his fifty years of haughty living no man had ever cast such words in his teeth. He raised his whip and stepped towards McGonigal.

"Come an!" yelled Murty, as he noted the action. "Strike me onct—just onct." He raised his big calloused hands

above his head, his fingers wriggling convulsively. "I'd like nawthin' better than to crack the bones av your neck across me knee. Even now, with all your gang around ye, 'tis all I can do to keep me hands aff ye."

In the silence that followed, above the crackle of the flames, could be heard the sobs of the women and the shrill cries of the children. It was that, and not any fear of McGonigal's threats, that gave the Laird pause.

"I dinna fear ye, McGonigal," he said proudly, "but for the sake o' the brave deed ye hae done this day we'll overlook the insults ye hae given me. Ye wrong me, man. I kenned naught o' the whereabouts o' the bairns. I am weel wi'in my legal rights in takin' the place and burning the buildings. Here, take this from masel as a token o' my appreciation of your noble action," he concluded, as he handed Murty several gold coins.

"Ye soulless ould tyrant," shrieked Murty, "do you think I'd smudge the hand av an honest man with your dirty gold? Give it to the mother ye might have made childless or the girl ye have made homeless." Contemptuously he snatched the money from the Laird's outstretched hand and passed it to Mrs. McNab.

The Chief made no reply. He mounted his horse and, followed by MacTavish and his retinue, rode on down the road.

The news of the outrage travelled fast. It was not the season for forest fires and the column of black smoke mounting high to the noonday sky had told the settlers for miles about that a building was in flames. Eager to be of assistance, they came hurrying, mounted and afoot, from all sides.

As they gazed on the smoking, blackened piles where once stood the buildings of John Mohr McIntyre, learned of the narrow escape and rescue of the children and that it was the hand of the Laird himself that had applied the torch, their angry eyes and darkly muttering lips told of a mounting rage too deep for words.

Duncan McNab, the father of the children, took Murty's

blistered hand in both of his and gazed at him for a moment speechless. But as he dropped to one knee, and threw his arms about his little ones, the tears coursed silently down his cheeks.

James McKay, one of the Chief's most faithful supporters, listened with a set face, then he said slowly:

"I hae stood by the McNab in all things, but from noo on, Laird o' my lands he may be, but he's no Chief o' mine. 'Tis a pity the good auld times would no come back when a bullet would soon reach him for the deed."

"Aye, Jeems, the same say I!" cried a hoarse voice. All turned in amazement. It was Fergus McPherson, who had just ridden up. "From noo on," he added, "I renounce the De'il and all his works."

"Noo, lassie," said McKay, as he laid his hand on Flora's shoulder, "bring your mother and yersal to my house. Till ye can hae another roof above your heads my home is yours."

"Less mak' dem a new house," suggested Narcisse quietly. "Lots men mak' him one quick job."

Murty uttered a boylike whoop.

"Men," he yelled, "men av McNab, for two years John Mohr McIntyre has been fightin' your fight with the Ould Tarrier. For your sakes, he's been hunted and persecuted and served time behind prison bars. Now, by Garrah, ye're not going to stand by and see him made homeless, not if ye have the hearts av men in your bosoms. A 'raisin' bee' it is, with every man in the grant on hand to finish it before John McIntyre comes home."

Exclamations of glad assent greeted the suggestion.

"There's nigh enough logs lyin' cut on my lot," suggested McKay.

"And the rest o' them ye can get from masel, if ye need more," added McPherson.

"Glory be!" exclaimed McGonigal. "'Tis a go. Sandy, me bye," he turned to a half-grown lad at his side, "there's me horse. Take him and ride towards White Lake and tell every man the sthory av to-day's doin's and tell them

to be here at eight o'clock to-morrow mornin' to bear a hand in the 'raisin'.' Will," he ordered another, "take Narcisse's horse there and ride by the lake to Sand Point with the same message.

"And both av ye," he added, with a grin, "be sure to say that anny able-bodied bye that don't come will have to settle it, man to man and fist to fist, with Murty McGonigal."

CHAPTER XXXI

TRAGEDY UNFORESEEN

FROM the scene of the conflagration Murty and Narcisse walked home in wordless silence. The Irishman, with drooping head and clenched fists, strode on in front, as if unconscious of Charbonneau's presence.

The cabin reached, McGonigal threw himself into a chair, and with elbows on knees, fists under his chin, gazed moodily at the puncheon floor, while Narcisse kindled a fire in the hearth. As the light from the rising flames illumined the log-walled interior, he glanced anxiously at his comrade.

"Mon Dieu—w'at is it?" he questioned fearfully.

Murty's face was the colour of chalk; drops of cold sweat were slowly trickling down his temples. His eyes, no longer bright with reckless merriment, were cold and hard as burnished steel. In a smile that was almost wolfish in its menace, his set teeth showed between his parted lips.

"Sainte Vierge, Murty," exclaimed Narcisse, "you are sick! 'Tis de swamp ague—you will commence de shake purty quick. Take some whiskey and go to bed."

"G'wan," snapped Murty, "I'm not sick. Hould your tongue, bye—lave me think—'tis no time for talk." Impatiently he pushed Narcisse's hand from his shoulder.

Charbonneau busied himself with preparations for the evening meal, eyeing his friend anxiously the while. McGonigal's black moods he knew full well, but never one like this. Days there had often been when the Irishman was but a surly companion, unapproachable, taciturn, with a contemptuous bearing towards all the world. But as quickly and unaccountably as they came such moods had

passed in a sudden burst of song and Murty would become his old jovial self again.

"Sing, Murty—one of dose livelee Irish song," suggested Narcisse.

McGonigal shook his head. For a space he sat staring silently into the flames.

"'Tis no time for singing, bye," he said wearily. "No time for singing. But wan song do I know that is fit for to-night."

He cleared his throat, and in a voice full of feeling sang:

"On his high-steppin' stallion Clanricarde rode by,
With a sneer on his lips, and with scorn in his eye,
And sez he to himself, as he chuckled with glee,
'I will tache thim wild Irish who's master,' sez he.

"So he came with his constables, sogers and all,
With their writs and their crowbars to ould Killinfall.
For to make but a pasture, where cattle might rove,
From the homes av their fathers, the people they drove.

"Then they tore aff the thatch, and laid low the wall,
Av each poor little shanty in ould Killinfall.
And the women they wept, 'neath the could winter sky,
When they saw their sick laid be the roadside to dic."

He paused for a moment. Narcisse, skillet forgotten in his hand, stood listening, his Gallic imagination held captive by the pathetic picture evoked by the words of the song and the dramatic intensity of the singer.

With the air of a man who has come to a final conclusion, Murty rose from his seat, stepped to the wall, took down his rifle from the wooden pegs, drew out the ramrod, and, adjusting a piece of white cloth to its end, proceeded to swab out the barrel. Then menacingly, triumphantly he chanted:

"Be the dark av the moon,—a swift bullet was sped,
In the grey av the dawn,—ould Clanricarde lay dead.
And his soul is in hell, midst the smoke and the flame,
But there's thousands curse yet, at the sound av his name."

The unmistakable import of the song, the definite purpose in the face of McGonigal, his sinister preparations, carried fearful conviction to the gentle soul of Narcisse Charbonneau. The skillet fell clanging to the floor. He rushed at Murty, clutched the rifle and made a vain effort to wrest it from him.

"Oh, Murty, ma fr'en'—is it dat you would keel—dat you would do de murder?" he questioned, in a trembling voice. "You would lose him your immortal soul."

"Lave me alone, bye." Murty jerked the weapon from his grasp and pushed him away. "Raybellion to tyrants is obedience to God."

His pale face still set in cold, cruel determination, the Irishman continued his preparations. When the last rag came from the muzzle as white as when it went in, he took a bullet from a leather pouch and with his knife blade carefully cut a cross on its curving surface. As he poured the powder charge from the horn into his hand again he sang, in a quivering voice, a mellow plaintive lilt, vibrant with the age-old sorrow of the conquered Celt:

"Oh, the Irish heart is tender,
The Irish heart is true,
'Twas only England taught us,
To hate our whole lives through.
God help the cruel tyrant,
Would hould us in his thrall,
For his shall be the fate that found
The Earl av Killinfall."

As with the last words he drove home the bullet, his voice rose to a shout, full-throated and merciless. It seemed the war-cry of the fighting Fenian.

"Oh, Murty, Murty, you mus' not! Have faith in de Bon Dieu. Mon Dieu, Murty, you will be hang." Narcisse almost sobbed.

"Mebbe—mebbe—and then mebbe not," was McGonigal's cool response, as he picked at the edges of the flint.

"Narcisse Charbonneau," he said impressively, as he

rose to his feet, "'twas me own grandfather sent ould Clancricarde to Hell, and his grandson is going, this blessed night, to send the Laird av McNab to the same place."

"But, Murty," moaned Narcisse, now on his knees, his arms about the Irishman's legs, "it is wicked to shed de blood. It is against de Holy Faith. Trus' in de Bon Dieu, Murty. He will bring him it all right in de end."

McGonigal's calloused hand rested for a moment affectionately on the curly locks of the Frenchman, and his eye softened.

"Git up, bye, 'tis no use to spake further. Ye cannot move me. Me mind is made up."

"But, Murty," persisted Narcisse, as he still clung to him, "you—you a Catholic, have no faith, no trus' in de Lord. Surely, surely will He make it come right in de end."

"Right ye are, Narcisse, me bye. So He will, in His own way. And I'm thinking the way has been shown me to-night. Yis, 'tis so. Whin the wurrud goes out to all the world that the Laird av McNab has died the death av the bullet, 'twill make them lawyers and politicians in Montreal and York wake up. 'Twill make such a hulla-baloo that they can't sit still anny longer. Then the truth will come out and justice will be done. 'Tis the only way, Narcisse. 'Twill take a sprinkle av blood to bring freedom to the grant. 'Tis the only way it ever comes annywhere.

"And, Narcisse," he said solemnly, "it's mesilf will go up the scaffold steps with a smile and a happy heart, if it saves McIntyre's colleen, Flora, from Allan Dhu and brings peace and freedom to me people here in the grant."

"Your people, Murty?—but dey are Scotch."

"Cousins we are, Narcisse. A thousand years in the could mists av the Highlands has given thim cast-iron faces, but beneath, their hearts are warm Irish hearts, as tender as the hearts av childher. And now, me lad," he said, as he clasped the hand of the weeping Charbonneau, "I must be going."

Narcisse had but one last appeal. "But, Murty," he sobbed, "your mother—in Ireland. She will not get her now de money every mont', and w'en she hear about——" Unable to speak further, Narcisse burst into a storm of sobs.

McGonigal started. His hand went to his brow as if to shut out some unwelcome sight and for an instant his shoulders shook convulsively. But when he drew his hand away his face was composed, his voice steady:

"Narcisse, you will sell the shop and me tools, and send her the money. Me other brothers will be seeing that she has always a bite and a sup. You will be writin' to her and tell her the hull story, Narcisse. She's Irish and she'll understand."

"Good-bye, lad, good-bye," he said tremulously, as he took Charbonneau's hand. "'Tis a good chum ye have been to me this manny a year. We may not meet ag'in this side av the grave, but, whether they catch me or not, raymimber me in your prayers. I will need them."

For an instant the eyes of the two men met. Then Narcisse threw his arms about the Irishman's neck and folded him in a brotherly embrace.

"Oh! Murty, Murty, ma fr'en'," he moaned.

As the door closed behind McGonigal, Narcisse dropped to his knees by the table and lifted his tear-stained face to heaven.

"Oh, Holy Virgin," he prayed, in his own tongue, "pray for him. Ask thy Son to save him, to soften his heart and cool his hot brain—to save him from the sin of murder and the death of the gallows."

Along the Flat Rapid road, silver white in the moonlight between its bordering walls of jet-black pines, Murty McGonigal hurried, his gun held closely to his side. One would have had to look twice to notice that he carried it.

Cautiously he slunk through the sleeping village, hiding at the sound of every approaching footstep and emerging into the moonlight again when the belated night-farer had

passed. Reaching the road leading to Kennell Lodge, he glanced anxiously at the sky for a friendly cloud, but there was not even a feather of mist to mar the silent beauty of the night.

No sound save the soft scuffle of his own feet on the sod, the distant cry of a night bird, and the muffled monotone of the rapids at the mouth of the Madawaska beyond Inch Bhui, no motion save his own form with its trailing shadow, like two lost twin souls wandering in a land of enveloping purity. Strange and ghostly seemed the night at mocking variance with the tumult in Murty McGonigal's soul. With the quiet peace of it all the hate and anger in his own heart contrasted bitterly.

The milky way showed a shimmering pathway of white, and the full-orbed moon silhouetted ahead of him the ragged line of the pine tops that marked the park about the Kennell Lodge. Once as he gazed upward into the scintillating firmament a star shot from its place and vanished into nothingness. To his superheated Celtic imagination it glowed with a fiery red that but confirmed his belief that, ere morning dawned, the Laird of McNab would have followed many a tyrant of the past into another world.

His plans were made. He would follow the road to the wharf, take the path by the lake shore and approach Kennell Lodge along the terrace from the north. It was still an hour or two before midnight and he hoped to catch a glimpse of the Chief through a window. Failing in that, he was determined to bring him if necessary from his bed by firing one of the outbuildings. Then from a safe hiding-place in the adjacent shrubbery he would fire the shot that would send the Laird of McNab to his just deserts.

Past the gate-house of Kennell Lodge and down the sloping, winding path on the fall of the hill he stole softly. He had nearly reached the boarded surface of the wharf when he stopped and gazed suspiciously to the right where tall green poplars crowded close to the water's edge. Then from the same direction came a warning hiss, unmistakably

from human lips. With a bound Murty reached the fence, darted through the turnstile and dropped to the ground amid a clump of cedars.

Enthralled with curiosity at the mystery surrounding him, he waited eagerly, alert to every sound that came floating to him on the still night air. Cautiously he peeped through the leafy screen in front.

Again a low whisper drifted to him from the poplars across the road. A moment later the trickle of stones sounded up the steep incline; a man was approaching.

"Now what the Divil is he up to to-night?" muttered Murty, as he recognised the figure of Allan Dhu.

His head bent in thought, his hands in his pockets, Allan strolled slowly down the slope. The planking of the wharf resounded to his loitering tread as he walked leisurely to the water's edge, and stood leaning on a snubbing post staring at the silver surface of the lake.

Even as Murty looked he saw a dark form slip from the obscurity across the road, another and still another till he had counted six—six blanketed Indians, their mocasined feet falling noiselessly on the boards, were gliding across the wharf towards the motionless figure of Allan Dhu.

Doubtless the son of the Laird never knew the fate that had overtaken him. As one in a dream, the astounded Irishman saw an upraised club descend on the head of McNab with a smothered thud. Then the six closed about him.

No word, no parley, no confusion. The avengers of Big Thunder's niece did swiftly and silently that which for ten days they had lay hidden in the environs of Kennell Lodge. Once Murty saw the flash of a knife, and heard a low groan that by a strange anomaly left him quivering like a leaf. A momentary clinking of metal as the boom chain lying on the wharf was wrapped about the senseless form—a quiet splash, and Allan Dhu McNab, his misdeeds and shortcomings, his weaknesses and triumphs were but a thing of memory in the minds of men.

"God have mercy on him.—Christ have mercy on him," sobbingly whispered the man in the bushes.

As the trembling McGonigal stepped through the stile, and stood listening to the swish of paddles dying away in the distance, a gleam of white on the wharf caught his eye. Walking over, he picked up three letters. They had evidently fallen from Allan's garments during the struggle. The smith scrutinised them closely, but the light was not sufficient to enable him to decipher the addresses. He dropped them into his pocket and, his own desperate purpose dissipated by the tragedy he had witnessed, hurried homeward.

Narcisse sprang out of bed as Murty struck the flint. He had not slept and his eyes were red with weeping.

"Oh, Murty!" he cried, "lose no time. I pray for you while you go to Father Dontigny and mak' de confession. Den run like hell for de States."

Murty was filling his pipe.

"Ye were right—me laddy buck," he said slowly. "Ye were right. The Lord has found His own way av punishing the Laird and be Garrah 'tis myself is willin' to lave the rest in His hands."

Narcisse stared at him incredulously. Then he grasped the rifle and smelled the barrel. Joy beamed in his face.

"Yis," went on Murty, "the Lord has taken the mather in His own hands, and what has happened this night will pierce the Chafe's proud old heart with a sword av sorrow that will never know end as long as his life lasts. And, what's more, me own hands are as free from blood as a prattlin' babe's," he concluded, as he related what he had seen.

Still incredulous, Narcisse, with the ramrod reversed, drew the wadding from the barrel. As the cross-cut bullet rolled into his hand he sobbed aloud: "Thank de Bon Dieu. —Thank de Bon Dieu."

Murty rose to his feet and took the rosary from the wall.

"This is a gossip community, Narcisse," he said warn-

ingly. "And like meself your own tongue has a way of waggin' when ye're in dhrink. Swear on this cross that ye'll niver tell the thing I have tould ye this night."

For an hour afterwards the smith sat alone in front of the hearth, staring into the fading embers. Then, after a searching glance at his sleeping comrade, he drew from his pocket the three letters he had picked up on the wharf.

One, addressed to Flora McIntyre and showing by the freshness of its wrapper and the lack of postmarks that it had never been mailed, he slipped into his pocket. The second addressed to the Laird bore the Perth postmark and was already opened. Murty read it with a puzzled expression, then he excitedly broke the seal on the third letter. As he did so several banknotes fluttered to the floor.

But Murty did not see them, his face had settled into an expression of utter bewilderment.

"Well, I'll be damned," he muttered, in awe-struck tones. "The poor bye—the poor bye and 'twas him that did it. May the Good Lord have mercy on his sinful sowl."

CHAPTER XXXII

A SUSPICIOUS SAVAGE

THE darkness was filled with the swish of rushing waters and the drone of a distant rapid. A bird in the shrubbery by the river brink twittered sleepily and relapsed to silence.

Slowly the sky flushed to a rosy pink; one by one the stars above the pointed fir-tops faded to nothingness, the tree trunks and jagged rock strata emerged to form and colour. A robin broke into a cheery burst of song, a jay darted screaming across the river, and as the first level rays of morning light shot across the surface of the stream, a chorus of joyous flutings burst from the blackbirds in the tree tops.

Beneath a tree, the long mound of grey stirred uneasily. Then the blanket was cast aside and Peter McIntyre sprang to his feet.

"Up, Mr. Craig—up!" he called. "We must hasten. If Big Thunder is at the mouth o' the Snake, we hae twelve hard miles afore us the day, as weel as a de'il o' a hard portage."

Hollow-cheeked and weary-eyed were the two men: the trip had proven even more arduous than they had anticipated. For eighteen hours after their departure from the Arnprior wharf they had made good progress, but on the morning of the second day their misadventures had begun. Their canoe, rammed by a water-soaked log, had sunk under them before they could reach the shore. Though both of their guns were missing, they had succeeded in recovering most of their blankets and provisions.

Two days later they had found the canoe several miles down the shore. But the repairing of the jagged hole in the bow, the gathering of the gum from the pines, the stripping of the bark from the birch trees and the long wait till the patch had dried had taken five days more.

Hardly had they faced again the swifter current of the narrowing river when the June rains descended on them in full force. For both Barclay Craig and Peter McIntyre the succeeding week had been a hideous memory of sleepless nights and toiling comfortless days, when the whole universe of sense and feeling had resolved itself into two things—the endless flowing surface of the river and the monotonous swish of the paddle that grew heavier with every stroke.

But the tedium of the hours on the water was as nothing compared to the strenuous labour entailed by the many "portages" where the canoe, blankets and provisions had to be carried on their heads along steep and pathless banks, where swarms of mosquitoes and the pestilent "Black Fly" of the Canadian woods left their hands and faces inflamed and bleeding. Their provisions were almost exhausted and, though the woods were full of game, the loss of the guns destroyed any hope of securing sustenance from the wilderness.

Yet must they on. It was highly probable that Big Thunder by this time had left his new camp on some summer jaunt and it might be necessary to follow him for miles through the untrodden wilderness to the north. An hour's delay might for all they knew be fatal to the final issue. The document which Duncan Cameron so stoutly maintained contained irrefutable proof of the Laird's chicanery must be recovered and placed in the hands of Commissioner Allen before his report was completed and acted upon by the authorities. The night before they had made camp twenty miles up the Coulonge River, and had learned from a passing riverman that Big Thunder and his band had been seen ten miles further up the stream.

The simple meal despatched, the laden canoe was once

again pushed into the turgid river, and under the impetus of bending backs and flashing paddles they drove on. Two hours later they swept about a bend to face a series of tumbling cascades.

"My God!" groaned Peter, as he lifted the canoe to his shoulder, "it seems to me as if I hae been paddlin' and carryin' and carryin' and paddlin' since the creation o' the world."

Craig, bent low under the accumulated weight of blankets and provisions, smiled wearily. He glanced down at his soiled and rain-soaked garb, and recalled with almost incredulous wonder the dapper cavalier who a year before had ridden into the domain of the Laird of McNab, little dreaming that May morning that he was entering a new world of strife and struggle, of joyous hopes and happy dreams, whose futile ending had left a weight at his heart.

The shadows of the pines were lengthening in the afternoon sunshine when a streak of slowly ascending smoke by a curving bay told them they had reached their journey's end. A few moments later they could glimpse amid the trees the pointed tops of the wigwams. It was Big Thunder's camp.

The Chief himself stepped down the grassy slope to meet them, but there was no welcome in his coppery countenance. His keen old eyes were busy noting every item in their equipment, their lack of firearms, and their jaded and dishevelled appearance. He assisted them to empty the canoe of luggage and place it upside down on the sand and then, without a word, led the way up the bank. At their approach several Indian women quietly withdrew to the wigwams, where from doorway and opening they peeped curiously at the visitors.

Big Thunder uttered a short sharp call, and from the cotton-covered dwellings emerged a score of Indians. Craig and McIntyre noted with dismay that, though their impassive faces indicated no hostility, each bore a rifle in the hollow of his arm. As if unconscious of the pres-

ence of the visitors, they seated themselves cross-legged about the smouldering fire.

"What does this mean?" Craig asked of Peter, in a low whisper.

McIntyre shook his head. He was equally puzzled by the silent show of force.

"Their ways are beyond understanding," he replied, in Gaelic. "None but God Himself knows the mind of an Indian, and I think sometimes He doesn't."

Big Thunder came slowly from a wigwam, in his hand a long-stemmed red-stone pipe, garnished with gaudy feathers. In silence he filled and lighted it, then after a few puffs handed it to the next in the circle.

"My young fr'en's have travel far?" he asked, when the pipe had made the circuit of the assemblage.

Before Craig could answer, Peter McIntyre blurted out: "Where is Whitefish? Wull he be here soon?"

Peter was well acquainted with Whitefish and the thought had occurred to him that he might aid them in attaining the object of their journey.

The Indians exchanged meaning glances. In Big Thunder's eyes anxiety showed plainly.

Two days ago, Whitefish and his five companions had rejoined their kinsmen, with the tidings that the son of the Laird of McNab had paid the penalty for his misdeed. At the first glimpse of the two white men in the strange canoe, the six had taken to the woods. Like them, Big Thunder suspected that the visitors were officers of the law in pursuit of the culprits, and Peter's sudden question strengthened this suspicion. Boldly he lied:

"Whitefish—he gone—gone four day—go see some Indian on the Dumoine River."

Craig rose to his feet, his mind grappling for the simplest and most fitting words to convey his message.

"Our business here is not with Whitefish, but with Big Thunder, the Chief of the Ottawas. We have come far, and only you can give us that which we seek. You know

well a man in the lands of the Chief McNab,—a man called Duncan Cameron.”

“Ugh,” assented the Chief, as he studied Craig’s countenance. “Gigininni, the man who drinks much—know him well.”

“He sends me with a message for you—to ask you to give to me that paper which he gave to you to keep for him.”

Again the Chief’s swift glance swept the faces of the two, then sought the ground. When he looked up after a space, he was smiling incredulously. This was an effort, he concluded, on the part of the two officers to save their faces. Finding Whitefish absent and the camp armed to the teeth, they were seeking to divert suspicion by alleging another reason for their visit. They seemed to be unarmed, but there were doubtless pistols concealed beneath their clothing. Probably the two were but advance scouts spying out the situation for the larger body of officers further down the stream. If all could be sent off on a false trail to the Dumoine River, all might yet be well. He remembered the paper Cameron had given him. It was hidden in his wigwam carefully wrapped in a deer-skin covering, and he was mindful of Duncan’s parting instructions to tell no one of its existence and to part with it under no circumstances till Cameron himself asked for it.

“Gigininni is well?” he parried.

“No,” replied Craig, “Duncan is hurt—shot. For that reason he was not able to come and he has sent us for the paper.”

Motionless as the tree trunks about them, the other Indians sat listening. All of them understood English and their quickly moving eyes told that they had grasped the meaning of the colloquy.

Big Thunder sat revolving the matter in his mind. If Whitefish’s surmise regarding the two was correct, it followed that they must be aware of Allan Dhu’s end. He wondered if he could bring them to some mention of it. Watching Craig closely, he asked craftily:

"The White Chief by the lake is well?"

"Well enough," assented Craig carelessly.

"And his son, the Dark One?"

"Well, too."

The Indian was puzzled. Craig's tone had been unconcerned, his face unruffled. Yet the two, judging by the time of their arrival at the camp, must have left the village of the White Chief many days after the tragedy. It was impossible that they did not know of it. Their pretended ignorance was an added proof that they were really in pursuit of Whitefish.

The white man's law, Big Thunder ruminated, was a strange and uncertain thing. Sometimes it put a man in jail for killing. At times it let him go free or sent him to his death. White men would feed a hungry Indian, but would imprison him if he took food when he was starving. Incomprehensible in its aim and irregular in its operation, he dreaded and distrusted it. Aside from the danger to Whitefish, the situation was one of possible peril to himself. For all he knew, even the admission that he had such a paper in his possession might be an offence that would send him to a prison cell. He had heard the settlers in the grant speak of the magic papers which in some unaccountable manner gave them a right to their farms. It was evident that they set much store by them. The only safe course would be for him to deny all knowledge of the document.

"Gigininni give me no paper," he said stoutly.

Peter uttered an oath.

"Big Thunder," he snapped irritably, "we ken ye hae the paper. Cameron said so and he doesna lie. We hae come many miles, surely ye wull no send us home wi' empty hands? We will wait till ye send for Whitefish. He wull tell ye that I dinna speak wi' a crooked tongue."

The Chief's subtle smile held a trace of amusement. To his mind the younger man, less crafty than his elder companion, had again indicated the real purpose of their visit. Before he could make answer a half-grown Indian boy

stepped quietly out of a woodland path and advanced towards the group. Craig's face brightened as he recognised the lad he had dragged from the river nine months ago. If the young barbarian had any sense of gratitude, he would prevail on his father to yield the precious document.

As Mushel dropped his burden of fish-nets on the ground, his eye lit on Craig. Striding over, he held out his hand and his bronzed youthful face softened in a welcoming smile.

"Glad—see—you," he grunted.

Turning to his father, he asked several quick questions, which the Chief answered at some length. Impetuously the lad broke into a torrent of Ottawa, meanwhile motioning with his thumb towards Craig.

"He's tellin' him about ye pullin' him out o' the river," chuckled Peter. "We'll get it the noo."

For a space following the lad's outburst Big Thunder stood in silent meditation, his gaze wandering from Craig to the boy.

He was evidently troubled. He had just learned that the man seated by the fire was the Roadmaker, who had saved his son's life at the risk of his own. He was owing a debt to Craig that he would be pleased in some manner to pay. Yet even if the fears of Whitefish and himself were unfounded, and if the strangers were telling the truth about the object of their journey, there was but one safe course to follow, to deny all knowledge of the paper. If Cameron himself came for it, he would yield it, and not until then. It was unwise to have ever accepted it from Duncan.

He shook his head regretfully. The boy understanding his father had come to a fixed conclusion, stared at him truculently for a moment, then with a muttered exclamation of disgust strode off towards a wigwam.

Big Thunder walked over to Craig and extended his hand.

"You are the Roadmaker. I not know that. Much I thank you for save my boy that time. My heart is sad

that I have not the paper of Gigininni. He no give me paper.

"But my young friend," he turned to Peter, "is wrong. You will not go from the camp of Big Thunder with empty hands."

He spoke to the seated Indians in peremptory tones. All sprang to their feet and the camp became a scene of bustling activity. One cut a haunch from a deer hanging to a tree, another appeared with a sack of flour, and a third with a string of fish. Without waiting for sign of consent from the visitors, the canoe was placed in the water and silently packed with belongings and the provisions. Big Thunder was as anxious to manifest his gratitude as he was to speed the strangers' departure.

"Bo Jo—Bo Jo," he grunted, as he shook their hands. It was a polite but pressing invitation to be gone.

"The damned tricky auld savage," raved Peter, as they paddled on down the darkening river. "I would like to take the lying auld deil by the thrapple and choke the truth from him."

Craig made no reply, he was beginning to doubt the truth of Cameron's story.

Dispirited and disheartened, they made camp a few miles down the river. Now that their quest had proven hopeless, there was no further need of haste. Even before the sun had vanished both had sought their blankets.

Hour after hour the river gurgled on. The moon slipped softly up from behind the Laurentian hills and flooded the glistening stream and mist-robed islands with silvery splendour.

Mingled with the song of the river came the plaintive laugh of a loon, the eerie hooting of innumerable owls and sudden squeaks that told of some nocturnal tragedy of the wilderness.

And now a new sound mingled with the voices of the night, the quiet swish of a paddle. About the point where slumbered Barclay Craig and Peter McIntyre floated a bark canoe, a lithe young figure crouching in the stern.

Backing water, he held his craft motionless for a moment, his eyes searching the grassy point. As his dilated nostrils caught the scent of a dying camp fire, he softly drove the prow of his canoe on the shelving sand. In a twinkling he was lying in the tall grass peering towards the trees.

Satisfied that the two were slumbering soundly, he rose to his feet and crept noiselessly towards them. Something white glistened for an instant in the moonlight, and then as softly and silently as he came the son of Big Thunder sought his canoe and vanished into the night.

Roused by the sunrise chorus of the birds, Craig sat up. He was about to call to Peter. Then he sat staring at the ground beside him. A roll of parchment lay almost touching his blanket. Curiously he unrolled it; then his mouth opened in utter amazement, and he rubbed his eyes as if not certain that he were in truth awake. His exultant shout brought Peter to his feet.

"Feigs, mon, I'm no deaf. Ye're yellin' fit to wake the dead."

"We have it," gasped Craig. "It's Mushel's doing."

With wildly beating hearts they pored over the document. It was an Order-in-Council dated on November 3, 1823, at the Executive Chamber in York and signed by Sir Francis Bond Head, the Governor of Upper Canada.

With trembling finger and quivering voice Peter McIntyre read aloud:

"That a township of the usual dimensions, be set apart next to the township of Fitzroy for the purpose of being placed under the superintendence and direction of the Laird of McNab, for settlement by his clansmen and others, the said township to remain under his control during a period of eighteen months when the progress of the experiment will enable the government to judge of the propriety of extending the period."

Peter McIntyre sprang to his feet, threw both arms high above his head, and the woods re-echoed his stentorian whoop of triumph. Then he turned to Craig:

"Duncan's tale was true—as true as Gospel writ. The Laird doesna own the grant. He's naught but the agent."

Craig, still studying the parchment, looked up, his gaze full of mystification.

"'But for a period of eighteen months only. . . .'"

"Do ye no grasp it, Mr. Craig? For ten years the Laird's friends hae been at the height o' their power at York, and they—Bond Head and the others—hae been extending his control o' the grant from year to year, till he robbed the lands o' the folk o' all the timber and o' rents that were no his by rights.

"The damned auld scoundrel!" he roared. "All these years he has been lyin' to his own kinsmen, and when the truth is kenned throughout the grant his life will no be worth a farthing."

CHAPTER XXXIII

"SERFS NO LONGER"

NOW, don't be worryin', Colleen," said Murty McGonigal to Flora McIntyre. "I have big hopes meself of that paper the surveyor is carryin' to Kingston. I belave 'tis genuine."

The two were standing in the moon-cast shadow of the newly erected McIntyre home. Generous and unanimous had been the response of the clansmen to the call for a "Raisin' Bee." For the last three days the clearing had echoed with the sound of the axe and the adze, the tattoo of hammers, and the steady song of the cross-cut saw. That afternoon had seen the building completed and the McIntyres duly installed in their new home. From the open door behind Murty and Flora floated the rhythm of Charbonneau's fiddle and the thunder of pounding feet. The success of the "Raisin' Bee" was being celebrated by a dance.

The girl made no reply to the Irishman's cheerful assurance. She stood gazing pensively at the mist-robed, moonlit woods, her face troubled and anxious.

From Peter she had learned the story of the recovery of the document, and from Murty himself the incidents following Craig's return. A dozen of the clansmen at the smith's hurried summons had gathered at the smithy and listened to the reading of the paper. Though opinions were divided as to its value, all had agreed that no time must be lost. McGonigal, James McKay, Fergus McPherson and Donald McNaughten had between them donated a fund to defray the expenses of the journey, and Craig had left at once for Kingston and York, where the sur-

veyor had been summoned to appear as a witness at the trial of the libel suit against the *Examiner*.

Flora had looked forward eagerly to Craig's return from the river trip, and now the thought that he had come and gone without the slightest recognition of her existence worried her greatly. She did not know that as soon as he had learned of the destruction of her home he had determined, in spite of the need of haste, to ride out of his way to find her at the home of James McKay, when the arrival of Narcisse with two letters, one the imperative summons to attend the Hincks' trial at York and the other her letter containing nothing but the sum of money he had loaned her, had sent him forth on his errand, hopeless and despairing. The knowledge that, though homeless, Flora had insisted on immediately repaying him had been to Barclay Craig like a blow in the face.

The girl's lips parted; she seemed about to speak; then hesitated.

"What is it, Flora?" asked Murty.

"Did—did—Mr. Craig—say—when—he would be back?" Mentally she gave thanks for the kindly night that hid her reddening brow.

McGonigal blew several smoke rings. His answer was very deliberate.

"No, sure and he didn't—not that I raymember. The bye isn't overburdened with riches, and he has his own way to make. I dunno now is there any rayson why he should come back." Her glance fell before his smiling scrutiny.

The music had ceased and the voice of Alec Stewart called:

"Get your partners for the next dance."

A dozen young men, wiping their perspiring brows with their coat-sleeves, swarmed out the door. One of them claimed Flora as his promised partner. Again the song of the violin mingled with the patter of feet and the voice of the "caller off."

On the stoop in front of the house the row of elderly men were discussing Craig's mission and the problematical value of the document.

"Tuts, lads," remarked James McKay, "the Laird's too sly an auld fox to be taken so easy. Dinna pin yer faith to that bit of paper. Legal papers be like the Scriptures, capable o' various interpretations. There will no be much o' it left when the lawyers at the capital get through explainin' it away."

A low murmur of assent followed McKay's sarcasm.

"I saw Magistrate McVicar himsel' in the village the day," said Donald McNaughten, "and the mon tellt me that MacTavish brought papers to his court showing beyond a doubt that the land and house o' McIntyre belonged to the Laird. McVicar says he could no do otherwise than issue the writ o' ejectment. Noo, if the grant is no the Laird's, how the De'il could that be?"

"Beats all," sighed McFarlane. "It looks as if we hae been toilin' and sweatin' ousal's for three days to make a gift o' a fine four-room house to the Laird."

A slim youthful figure came striding up the moonlit path from the roadway. It was Malcolm McPherson, a newspaper in his hand.

"A post has arrived, just noo," he announced, "and it's no good news it brings."

"Come in the house, Laddie," suggested his father. "The folk will be wanting to hear."

At their entrance the dancing slowed down, Murty waved his hand to Narcisse and the Frenchman laid his violin aside.

All stood listening attentively as Malcolm, bending close to the candle light on the table, read from a copy of the *Kingston Whig*, already a week old, a short news item stating that information had been received from York that the jury in the case of the Laird of McNab against the *Daily Examiner* had found for the plaintiff. The article concluded:

"While our informant was not able to learn the amount

of damages, it is generally believed that the verdict will be for the full amount of the £10,000 asked by the Laird of McNab."

For some moments the room held a depressing silence. "My God! noo think of that," sighed McKay, "and in the piece Hincks writ about the grant there was no one word o' lie."

Duncan Cameron, cane in hand and his head still bandaged, appeared in the doorway.

"I was o'er at McPherson's crackin' wi' Peter and Ellen," he explained, "and when I saw Malcolm hurryin' from the village wi' a paper in his hand, I kenned 'twould mean a bit news.

"I dinna doubt it, folk," he said sadly, as he laid down the copy of the *Whig*. "I am beginning to think that paper has given Mr. Craig and Peter naught but a wild-goose chase. I hae a wee bit news masel," he added.

"Hae ye noted the big Englishman," he asked, "him wi' the unco' red face and the city clothes? He's been stoppin' at Kennell."

"Aye," assented a voice. "He's been about the mills and the dam wi' MacTavish and the Chief."

"Weel," continued Cameron, "in the village the day I came up wi' the auld warlock MacTavish, and the man would no let me pass wi'out tellin' me this. 'Tell them fools,' sez he, 'they that be makin' a new house for John Mohr McIntyre, that they be losin' their time. The Laird has sel't the grant to Mr. Middleton and wi'in a month ye'll all be put off.'"

The silence that followed was broken by the cutting voice of James McFarlane:

"Your tidings, Duncan, calls to my mind a passage o' the Scripture, the time Elijah spoke wi' the prophets o' Baal: 'Your God must be on a journey, or peradventure, he sleepeth.'"

McFarlane was a bit of an agnostic and there was amusement in the dry smile with which he noted their horrified faces,

For a time silence held. McIntyre's land belonged to the Laird. Then the hopes held out by the positive wording of the document were deceptive. Even Duncan Cameron himself now admitted as much. If McIntyre could be so served, so might they all. And the courageous editor, who had taken up their fight, had met with crushing defeat. Their two days' united toil in which they had gloried as a supreme defiance of the Laird, had been worse than wasted, for the very building in which they sat, with its white puncheon floors and well-chinked walls, that, too, was the Laird's.

Donald McNaughten rose to his feet with a heavy sigh.

"Men, I'm think we canna do better than send a messenger to Mr. Barr o' Horton, and hearken to what he has to say. Ye mind Barr, the man who two months ago was amongst us, speirin' for settlers for his new lands by the Bonnechere. I ken the land weel, 'tis good land, I hae been o'er it masel two years ago."

"Aye, Donald," assented James McKay, "ye're right. But we should no be interferin' wi' the young folks' fun. Come over to my house and we'll crack a bit about it."

As the last of the older men stepped out the door, the music struck up and the dance swung on. For, bring the future what it might, the bounding pulse and joyous surge of youth was theirs.

But among the swaying figures was no Flora McIntyre. She had stepped out the rear door and was standing beneath the star-filled sky, her fists clenched, her eyes aching with the tears that would not come.

The utter hopelessness in the words and manner of the elder clansmen had filled her with despair. Even Murty McGonigal had left the scene of festivity to join in the council.

Was this to be the end? After all the months of worry, of alternating hopes and fears, must this new home be abandoned? Must she and hers, as well as all the clansmen, face once more the long years of struggle with the wilderness?

And the fonder, sweeter hope so long interwoven with her anxieties, the single golden strand that had intertwined itself with her sorrows, that too was fading. And it was her own fiery, untamed temper, her own hasty, bitter tongue that had sent Barclay Craig from her, perhaps forever.

With a rush the tears came to her eyes. About her was the night, but in the girl's soul, as she sobbed alone, her head bent on the top rail of the log fence, was the blacker night of foreboding fears and unavailing remorse.

Two hundred yards away a horseman was plodding along the cross-road. As he turned the corner and suddenly drew rein he uttered an exclamation of bewilderment.

“My God!” muttered John Mohr McIntyre, as he rubbed his eyes, “am I bewitched?”

Where once had stood his house and barns was only empty space. A short distance away loomed a strange and unfamiliar structure from whose open door and windows, blazing with yellow light, came the throb of music, the rush of feet, and the ripple of laughter.

Could he have missed his road. Impossible—there was the familiar line of the tree tops, clear cut against the stars; there the home of his neighbour, James McKay.

The goad fell with a sudden slash and the tired steed bounded forward. McIntyre threw himself off and strode to the light-filled doorway.

“John Mohr!—John Mohr!” came the welcoming cry from a dozen voices.

“What—what means this?—Where's my lass and my wife?—and my house?—What house——”

“Your good wife is asleep in yon room, John Mohr,” interrupted Stewart, who was wringing his hand. “Flora is fine. She's somewhere about. This house is your own. 'Tis a free gift from the people o' the grant. The Laird burnt the other one. We've stood by ye, man, as ye hae stood by us.”

"Burnt my house—the Laird," gasped McIntyre incredulously.

Flora stepped in the door behind him and with a little cry of welcome drew his face down to hers. Mrs. McIntyre, at the sound of the familiar voice, emerged from her room and greeted him in her quiet way.

"Monsieur McIntyre have him some news?" enquired Narcisse. "De editor man, de papaire say he'es got him de worse of it."

"Aye, he did that." A sudden smile lightened McIntyre's face. Somehow he did not have the air of a bearer of evil tidings.

"Hold a bit!" exclaimed Stewart. He turned to a barefooted lad at his elbow. "Bobbie, take yersel wi' all haste o'er to McKay's and tell them John Mohr's back from York wi' news."

The older men came crowding into the room.

"Aye," said McIntyre, in response to several simultaneous questions. "The editor lost the case. The jury found agin him."

"How much were the damages?" asked McNaughten.

For a moment McIntyre made no answer, there was a glint of fun in his eyes, as they swept the eager faces.

"Hincks," he said, with a chuckle, "wull hae to pay the Laird," again he paused his eyes twinkling, "the enormous sum of one pound six for the loss of his character."

"'Twas one of Bond Head's auld Judges—Jonas Jones by name, that tried the case. He charged heavily agin the editor. If 'twas no for that, 'twould hae gone the other way."

"There was no word in Kingston when ye passed through o' Commissioner Allen's report?" queried McFarlane, when the laughter had subsided.

McIntyre ran the fingers of one hand through his bushy hair, the other resting on his knee was trembling slightly.

Slowly he rose to his feet.

"Kinsmen and Brothers," his voice rang out with startling clearness. "We hae won. Mr. Allen's report upholds

us at every point, and condemns the Chief's management o' the grant. It has been accepted and approved by the government.”

“How about that paper?” cried Cameron. “Noo, ye coofs, was auld Duncan daft?”

“Your paper tellt the truth, Duncan,” went on McIntyre. “The McNab was never the owner o' the grant in fee simple. He was naught but an agent. Only the lands about Kennell are his own. The grant has been taken from him and I dinna doubt he kens about it himsal by this time. The special messenger wi' the copy o' the Order-in-Council left York two days before mase.”

“Clansmen o' McNab,” the voice caught, then rose exultantly, “we be serfs no longer.”

Called from a council where they had been discussing the question of leaving the grant forever, the tidings of their complete and overwhelming victory left them speechless.

Silent and still they sat, their wide eyes on McIntyre. Through the door came the rumbling chorus of frogs and the lonely hoot of an owl. The chirping of a cricket close at hand seemed magnified a thousand times.

A delirious, triumphant whoop filled the room.

“W-o-o-w!” Murty McGonigal sprang to the middle of the floor, leaped straight up in the air, and brought his heavy boots together with a resounding whack.

“Cheer,” he yelled. “Cheer, ye wooden faces. Yell, ye stoten-bottles. Yell!”

He jumped on a chair and swung his hands aloft.

“Hip-hip-hooray!”

Over the dark woods and moonlit meadows rolled the volleying cheers.

“Now,” ordered Murty, “wan for John Mohr McIntyre.”

“Hip-hip-hooray!”

“And for Duncan Cameron, the man that stole the paper.”

“Hip-hip-hooray!”

“And now wan—a good wan for the bye that took the petition to the governor—Barclay Craig.”

The shout that went up shook the rafters.

"By Garrah, John Mohr," said Murty, when the cheering had ceased, "'tis a celebration, we must be havin'. Let's send out the fiery cross, for a picnic in the commons by Inch Bhui. When will it betther be?"

"Commissioner Allen wull be here," responded the smiling McIntyre, "the day after the morrow. We'll hae it then and he wull tell us all about it."

"We'll start out the cross in the mornin'. 'Tis no Scotchman I am but be Garrah, its mesilf will be carryin' it the last lap from me shop to the picnic grounds."

The guests had departed; Mrs. McIntyre had retired. John Mohr McIntyre, walking about the room, was curiously examining the interior of his new home.

His daughter sat at the table, her head leaning on her hand. As she related the details of the destruction of the buildings and the narrow escape of the McNab children, McIntyre's face hardened.

"I canna think," he said, "that Chief wuld hae ever done sic a deed by himsal. 'Twas the work o' MacTavish."

"And Peter married to McPhairson's lass and Fergus himsal wi' us noo," he mused. "Weel, weel, I hardly looked for all that. 'Twull be all weel wi' Peter and Ellen noo."

"Did—did you see Mr. Craig—in York?" asked Flora, in a low voice.

"Aye,—many times—in the court room. He was a witness. Lassie, yon's a fine man, any way ye take him. They had him on the stand for three hours, a wee, sharp-nosed attorney pesterin' him wi' tangled questions, and he couldna fluster Craig no more than ye could fell a tree wi' a penknife. A dozen times, the surveyor turned the laugh agin him."

She sat, her eyes downcast, her fingers nervously folding and refolding the handkerchief in her lap. Another question was trembling on her lips.

"Lass?" asked her father suddenly, "what's fashin' ye the noo?"

Her head sank to the arm resting on the table and her shoulders shook.

“Is Mr. Craig—coming back?” she sobbed.

McIntyre’s eyes opened wide with sudden comprehension. He raised her tear-stained face with his fingers.

“Ye love the lad, Flora?” he asked softly.

“Yes, Father.”

“And he loves ye?”

Flora nodded.

“To tell the truth, lassie,” he said, after a moment’s thought, “Mr. Craig didna say a word about coming back. And I didna think to ax him.”

“But,” he added, as he took a candle from the table, “ye hae no call to greet. If I ken anything about that young man, ’twill take more than a wee bit lovers’ quarrel to keep him from coming back.”

Her father’s words brought little comfort. For surely, surely if Craig had intended to return, he would have mentioned it to him. And her father did not know that it was she, herself, who had broken all bonds between them. And that though less than three miles from her, Barclay Craig had left the grant without the slightest effort to seek a reconciliation.

It was a very remorseful and very miserable woman who that night sobbed herself to sleep beneath the freshly hewn rafters of the McIntyre home.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A CHIEFTAIN FORLORN

THE ten years' imposture was ended.

Even before McIntyre's return the news of the government's decision had reached Kennell Lodge. A special messenger had served on the Chief a copy of the Order-in-Council removing him from control of the township, and directing that he submit at once a statement showing the amounts still owing to him by the individual settlers.

More by the pressure of events than by any deliberate intention, had the Chief and his Chancellor drifted into a position where any other pretension than that the McNab was the owner of the grant had become almost an impossibility.

Few of the first settlers spoke English and most of them were illiterate. Knowing nothing of the new-world system of free land-tenure, they had taken it for granted that the land was the Laird's, even as in their native Scotland the hill-side farms of Glen Dochart had been the property of his grandsire. During their very first interview with the Chief in Montreal, after their arrival from Scotland, had they not heard him speak of "his grant," and "his township"?

As the years passed, and most of the younger and some of the older men acquired a knowledge of English, they learned that in the neighbouring townships of Fitzroy and Lanark, the landlords were only agents, who had contracted with the government for the settlement of their townships. These "land agents," as they were known, had advanced to their immigrants sufficient money to pay the

nominal price set by the government on the lands, the cost of erecting the log-built homes, and the maintenance of the settlers for the first few years. To protect their investment, the agents took mortgages on the farms, and issued to the pioneers an agreement known as a "lease" which stipulated that as soon as the quit-rent had satisfied the mortgage, they would secure for the individual settlers government patents giving them clear title to their farms.

And such in fact were the terms on which the Laird of McNab had secured his own township, but of this not a man in the grant had an inkling.

It was a period when the means of communication were few and difficult, when general information was far from wide-spread, when even a weekly paper was seldom to be found in pioneer homes. The discovery that different and more favourable conditions prevailed among the settlers in the neighbouring townships aroused no suspicion among the clansmen. To their Scottish minds, the fact that their own landlord was a Highland Chieftain was an adequate explanation of the difference, and their implicit confidence in the McNab fostered and maintained the delusion.

Without questioning, the former Governor of Upper Canada, Sir Francis Bond Head, an intimate friend of the Laird's, had renewed from year to year the latter's contract for the settlement of the grant, until even the people of Fitzroy and Lanark did not doubt that the Chief had received from the authorities an actual gift of the township that bore his name. And the Laird saw no good reason for contradicting an assumption that added to his prestige and tended to make the clansmen more amenable to his authority.

From the first the McNab had a private understanding with Bond Head, that he was to have the privilege of cutting and marketing the timber, from the lots of the settlers—a privilege for which there was no authority either in law or custom. The far-seeing MacTavish, anticipating

possible objections from some of the settlers, had endeavoured to give a show of legality to the Laird's timber-cutting operations, by drawing all the leases to read "rent to me and my successors in the chieftaincy of the Clan McNab," a wording which he knew would strengthen the impression that not only the grant but all therein was the property of the McNab.

Even during the first years of the settlement, the revenue from the timber far exceeded that from the rents of the settlers and the Chief and his Chancellor were soon in a position where to admit that the Laird was only an agent of the government would have meant serious financial loss, and possibly legal complications.

Neither had any fear of the outcome. From those in authority there was nothing to dread. With the members of the Family Compact the McNab stood high, and if some of them suspected the truth, they held their peace. Both Mac-Tavish and the Laird were well aware that if the questions of rent and timber were carried to the higher courts, their true relation to the grant would be revealed. But this caused them no anxiety. Who was there among the clansmen with sufficient financial resources to enter on a prolonged and costly legal battle?

At times the Chief had his moments of foreboding, when he questioned the wisdom of the course to which they seemed irretrievably committed. But the Chancellor had always dissipated his doubts by pointing out that before the true state of affairs could become known, the Chief would have amassed a princely fortune from the sale of the timber not only from the grant, but from the unsurveyed Crown Lands further up the Madawaska and Bonnechere rivers, which he was plundering systematically.

He also suggested that if ever an exposure was threatened, the Chief would by that time be more than reimbursed for his outlay in bringing the clansmen from Scotland by the rents he had received, and that he could play a magnanimous part by voluntarily relinquishing all claim to rent. By this action he would anticipate and prevent any

legal difficulties and would cement forever the loyalty of the clansmen to the house of McNab. And such indeed might have been the outcome, had it not been for the unexpectedly rapid march of events.

For neither of the masters of Kennell Lodge dreamed that the seemingly invincible power of the Family Compact would be blown to oblivion by the stern breath of civil war, nor of the transformation in the spirit of the government that was to result from the bloodshed at St. Denis and St. Charles. Fatuously, they had looked forward to the permanency of a system of government based on family prestige and personal friendship.

True, the announcement of Lord Durham's report to the home government, a report which pointed out the absolute necessity for reform, had caused them some worried speculation. But at the news of Durham's resignation, and the appointment of Sydenham, they had concluded with the cynicism of age, that any efforts at reform would be superficial and meaningless—mere sops thrown out to pacify the reform element. Neither was cosmopolitan enough to recognise that the threatened change was but the reflection in the New World of the spirit of the intrepid and turbulent democracy, which during that decade was making itself felt in all European countries, and especially in the lands where floated the British Flag. But the news that Barclay Craig had been released from prison and had succeeded in placing the petition in the hands of Lord Sydenham had thrown them into a panic. The McNab at once set out for Kingston for the purpose of ingratiating himself with the new government and to inspect and if possible secure, either by bribery or cajolery, the documents that might be used against him in case of an investigation.

To his amazement and delight, he found that all the records of Sir Francis Bond Head's administration had been lost in a storm on Lake Ontario during the removal of the archives from York to the new capital. Bond Head and his secretary were both dead, and any witnesses who might be called were men of the old régime, who would

have no love for the new government, and who would be willing to testify that as far as common report went, the township of McNab was the property of the Laird.

On the night of his return to Kennell the Chief had almost decided on a policy of pacification, when the destruction of his boat house by the Black Boys and the virulence of Hincks' attack had aroused him to unreasoning fury. Finding himself unexpectedly in possession of the power to organise and control an armed posse, he had proceeded to evict Campbell and McDairmid who MacTavish claimed had been active in the outrages of the Black Boys.

The day before the evictions, MacTavish had learned of Cameron's oft repeated statement concerning the Laird's lack of title to the grant and he shrewdly concluded that Duncan must be in possession of the document. But to the threats of the Chancellor, Cameron had vouchsafed only a defiant and sneering denial. It was at the Chancellor's suggestion that the Laird and his posse had the following night made the attack on Duncan's cabin.

Alone in the great living room of Kennell Lodge sat the Laird of McNab. It was forty-eight hours since he had received the news of his deposition, but his drawn and haggard face, his troubled eyes, and weakly quivering mouth told that he had not yet recovered from the blow.

Vanished forever were his dreams for the future greatness of the House of McNab. To remain a resident of a community where lived the men who had worsted him was to a man of the Laird's spirit an impossibility. From now on his claim to the chieftainship of the Clan McNab was but a hollow mockery. To-morrow a stranger was to enter into possession of Kennell Lodge.

The purchaser was the Englishman Middleton, whom two weeks ago the McNab had brought from Montreal, with a view of interesting him in the re-opening of the Buchanan mills. But since the sudden turn of affairs, the Chief had offered him both the mills and his own private

estate about Kennell at such a ridiculously low figure that Middleton had immediately accepted.

The Chief had risen from a sleepless couch, and for hours he had been alone. MacTavish had not appeared at the morning meal and Allan as far as he knew was in Montreal. Not one of the clansmen on whose fealty he had counted, on whom he had showered favours without number and who had been frequent visitors at Kennell Lodge, had crossed its threshold for the last two days.

Suddenly he thought of his son. With all the lack of sympathy between them, the lad had always been true to him. He would find him in Montreal and together they would map out a new future. He called Lipsey, Allan's personal servant, and inquired if he knew Allan's address in the city.

Lipsey shook his head.

"Verra strange was the way the lad ganged away," was his comment. "I kenned he was goin' to the city, but he left the Lodge late the night McIntyre's house was burned. His gear had been sent on by the stage two days afore. The lad must have walked to the village, and got him a horse there to ride to the stage line at Carp. His own horse was no taken out o' the byre that night."

"I'll be findin' him at the King's Arms, or the Colonial," remarked the Laird. "'Tis there the lad generally puts up. Call MacTavish, he may ken about it."

Lipsey's countenance when he reappeared wore an expression of amazement.

"The Chancellor is no in the house, Chief. McCuan says that he left in the night. Donald's gone, Angus is gone and since morning we three hae been the only ones in Kennell Lodge."

The misery in the Laird's face deepened.

"The auld rat—the auld rat. I would no hae thought it o' him."

But a moment later, as he opened a desk where he always kept a supply of ready money, he swore roundly.

It was empty save for a letter addressed to the Laird himself.

Breaking the seal he read:

"I have taken with me for my own protection, the most of the papers concerning the timber cutting, the land leases and the rents. I think ye wull see for yersal that it would no be wise to make too many inquiries about my own whereabouts. It will be to your interest to have your former Chancellor completely lost for a bit. For should your affairs come into the courts I would be forced to testify against ye."

The Laird's face whitened with impotent anger.

"The domned auld scunnerl," he muttered, as he sank to a seat. "He has robbed me o' five hundred pound and he kens weel I dare no push him for it."

"Call Ian," he ordered Lipsey.

The aged chamberlain came shuffling into the room.

"Where's Angus and Donald," the McNab asked.

"Both gone, Chief."

"And for why? They said naught to me when they axed for their pay yester'een."

"They tellt me," said McCuan, "that they would no take service under the new master, and they didna care to quit the grant and the clansmen."

The Laird regarded them thoughtfully for a moment.

"And ye two," he queried. "Why hae ye no gone?"

"For why should I gang?" said Ian simply. Lipsey stood silently twisting his bonnet in his hands.

"Ye dinna ken," resumed the Laird, "that I am noo a ruined man, wi' scarce a bawbee to my name. If ye stick to masel, ye must look to ken want. Why hae ye no looked out for yersals?"

"I didna ken it was so bad as that," said old Ian, in a shaking voice. "But it makes na difference. For sixty year, Chief, I hae served ye and your feyther afore ye, and I be most too auld to larn new ways. But I'm no too auld to serve ye yet. Where ye gang, I gang."

The Chief turned to Lipsey.

"Ye be my Chief," Lipsey said quietly, as he raised his fingers to his forelock, "and wi' ye I'll gang to the ends o' the airth, if ye let me."

"God bless your loyal hearts," cried the Chief, with moistening eye. "O' all my clan, but two—but ye two. Wi' me ye'll gang. I lied to ye just noo. I dinna want for siller, and while ye live neither o' ye wull ken want or worry."

As the three horsemen rode through the village on their way to reach the stage line at Carp, the loungers seated at the door of Hans Schubrink's grog shop eyed them curiously. Not a man but knew the Laird was leaving the grant forever.

Among them were Alec Stewart, who many a time and often had cursed the Laird as a tyrant, John Campbell, whose family Madigan's posse had set by the roadside, and a half dozen others who had ridden with the Black Boys.

Was it the accumulated force of the habit of centuries or was it that some throb of pity stirred their hearts for the sad-faced man, whose broken spirit showed in the glance that met theirs almost beseechingly,—no one may ever know. Who can say why each and every man rose to his feet and lifted his hand to his hat.

The Chief's lips parted in surprise, his eye brightened and something of his old spirit showed in his sweeping return of the salute.

But as the three mounted the low rise beyond the river the McNab drew apart from the others, turned his horse about and for a space sat in his saddle gazing at the winding Madawaska, the long wooden bridge across the dam, the stone grist-mill, and the dusty silent street. Then his eye wandered further down the stream and rested for a moment on the pointed pine tops above Kennell Lodge, across whose threshold he would never step again.

His lip trembled and with a heavy sigh, the last Laird of McNab rode on into a world that knew naught of clans and chieftains.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE LAST OF THE FIERY CROSS

HIGH tide of June in the grant and in the hearts of the clansmen of McNab a summer such as they had never known.

Ended forever were the years of harrowing uncertainty and wearying strife. Their homes and their clearings were their own. Henceforth no "Highland Chieftain, his heirs and successors" could call them "his tenants."

On this day of cool, moist breezes and sun-soaked splendour, of radiant blue above and greening fields below, they were gathered in the pine-girt clearing, on the hill above Inch-Bhui where slept so many of their kindred, to celebrate their hard-won victory, and to hear from Commissioner Allen the details of the settlement.

"The Cross wull be coming in a bit," said Duncan Cameron to Flora McIntyre and her mother, seated beneath a tree, on the edge of the clearing. "'Tis o'er late, but 'twas thought best to send it to every house in the grant."

The girl smiled wanly. This day—to others a day of joy unbounded—had been to her but a long succession of hours weighted with unbearable suspense. Though Commissioner Allen was expected now at any moment, of Barclay Craig she had been able to glean no tidings.

The girl's troubled eyes wandered from the long tables, strewn with the signs of a recent repast, to the railed platform where a merry maze of dancers whirled to the music of Narcisse Charbonneau's violin. A short distance away a group of elderly clansmen paused in their leisurely conversation to smile at the uproarious applause

that greeted some unexpected feat of strength. For the Caledonian games, the games of the old land, the putting of the shot, the casting of the caber, were in full progress. On the seats at the edge of the clearing, young mothers, their babes in their arms, sat smiling happily, side by side with shawl-wrapped old women, whose thoughts were far more of the past than of the future that was opening before them.

High above the murmur of conversation and rhythm of dancing feet came the drone of the bag-pipes. The music ceased, the platform was emptied, and all rushed towards the roadway.

"There's the pipes—the cross is coming," exclaimed Duncan as he hurried away. "'Tis the last time in the grant. I must no miss it."

The throng wavered and seethed, then opened in a narrow lane, every head turned towards the runner now approaching from the direction of the village.

Garbed in a red shirt, as red as his fiery locks, the blackened cross in his hands, on came Murty McGonigal.

Unheeding the chorus of cheers from the crowd closing behind him, the Irishman dashed on. Flora, standing on tip-toe, saw him emerge from the throng, thread his way among the scattered spectators, then race across the open intervening space, till he halted, panting and sweat bedewed, face to face with John Mohr McIntyre.

"Take it, Chief," he cried as he held out the cross. "Take it, John Mohr McIntyre. The Tarrier's gone and above all men ye have the right. Take it, Chief."

Few heard his words clearly, but all grasped the significance of his action. A volley of cheers and hats tossed high in the air told of their approval.

The Chief was gone, leaving them a chiefless clan. Some one must take his place. For a world without a chief, a single strong personality, a connecting link between themselves and the state was to their Highland minds difficult of conception. And who better than John Mohr McIntyre,

himself, distantly related on his mother's side to the family of the McNab.

Flora McIntyre, her own tribulations for a moment forgotten, gazed at the scene with pride-filled eyes. Suddenly the tumult stilled. She saw the figure of her father, standing on a wagon, loom above the mass of closely packed heads. In his hand, John Mohr held the cross of blackened twigs.

"Kinsmen," he began, his utterance thick with repressed emotion, "from the bottom o' my heart, I thank ye, but I must say no."

A clamour of dissent interrupted him.

"I must say 'No'," he repeated stubbornly. "In this new time that is beginning for us, no place wull there be for clans or chieftains. That day has gone for aye. In the years to come when ye and masel lie yonder in Inch Bhui, let there be no hollow mockery o' the past to be a clog to the feet o' our bairns, to hinder them from keeping step wi' the march o' progress.

"But we wull no forget the clan, and the lessons it has given us. All that was fine, all that was noble, all that was generous, the spirit o' mutual help, and o' brotherhood—these things the clan has taught us, and these things we can keep in our hearts for aye, and hand them on to our bairns."

He paused, his pregnant words sinking deep into their thoughtful minds.

"For him that is gone," he continued solemnly, "in this the hour o' our own triumph, I hae no word o' blame. The man wrought as he saw, and his vision was that o' the past. Let us no forget this, that if it wasna for him we would yet be miserable crofters in Perthshire. Let us think o' the best o' him, no the worst."

He glanced down at the cross in his hand.

"But for this symbol o' the past that has so often become for us a sign o' injustice and tyranny, I would that I could cast it to the flames to betoken the ending o' the wrongs that hae been done wi' its help in this new land."

"A good thought," cried Alec Stewart. "Make a bon-fire, lads."

No other urging was needed. From all parts of the grove young men came running, their arms piled high with branches. Murty McGonigal, with a satisfied smile, struck a light and applied it to the heap.

Very, very quiet was it. Every eye, sombre and thoughtful, was fixed on John Mohr McIntyre, as he stood the cross outstretched in his hand above the leaping flames.

"From this hour henceforth," he said slowly, as it dropped from his fingers, "the clan McNab is no more." His words had all the solemnity of a last farewell.

There was no applause. In silence they stood gazing at the token of clan-loyalty slowly disintegrating in the glowing embers. It was a moment pregnant with meaning for themselves and their children.

But as Michael Roddy, who with saddened face had been looking on in wordless silence, turned away, his gaze met that of Sandy Fisher, understandingly. As if for mutual support the two old men linked arms and with heads bent turned their backs on the scene and went plodding down the road towards Arnprior.

At the sound of hand-clapping, Flora McIntyre turned her head. She could see a horseman entering the clearing. For a moment he was hidden by the intervening shrubbery, then her hopes faded as the shout went up.

"The Commissioner—the Commissioner."

A moment later, as cold and dapper as ever, Allen mounted the platform, a folded paper in his hand. Eagerly, they gathered about him, with upturned faces.

He congratulated them on the settlement of the vexed problem and explained that the long delay which had chafed them so sorely was due to the fact that all the records concerning the grant had been lost during a transfer of the archives from York to Kingston, and that the fruitless search in the other departments of the Government for other papers concerning the grant had taken many weeks. But the arrival of Barclay Craig with the copy of the

original document, which bore on its face evidence of its own authenticity, had solved all their perplexities. His own report condemning the Laird's management had been accepted by the Government as a basis for action.

"From now on," he concluded, "no one has any control over you. Any money you may be owing to the Chief will be paid to the Government. You can pay it in four yearly installments, and a longer time, if needed, will be granted you. All receipts you hold for rent paid to the Laird will be accepted at their face value in lieu of cash. Also you will be given full credit for any work you have done at Kennell Lodge, or on the Chief's private roads. These will be credited to you at the current rate of wages."

An astonished silence followed his last words. They seemed too good to be true.

"My God," muttered James McKay. "I will no be called to pay a penny. I hae more than enough receipts to pay off all the price o' the land and the settlement fees."

"And masel too," chorused a dozen voices.

"Three cheers for the Commissioner!" shouted Peter McIntyre, and they were given with a right good will.

As amid the thundering hurrahs Commissioner Allen dropped from the platform, Flora McIntyre turned away in dull despair. All day long she had been comforting herself with the hope that Craig would surely arrive in company with the Commissioner, and now that hope had vanished.

She wanted to be alone—alone to struggle with her sorrow. She was walking slowly among the trees, towards the cemetery, when she came to a sudden halt, her hand went to her heart, and she stood quivering in every limb.

Through the opening behind her a new voice came drifting to her ears—a voice that sent the blood rushing to her brow—the voice of Barclay Craig.

With face composed but tumultuously throbbing breast, she hurried toward the throng that clung about the platform.

Craig did not see her. His smiling glance was fastened on Cameron, Narcisse and Murty who stood close to the

railing. His head was bare, and a ray of sunshine filtering through the branches overhead fell on his erect figure, his finely chiselled features and pointed beard.

He was speaking of his pride at having had a slight share in the victory of the day, of the many warm friendships he had formed in the grant and of how his experiences had made him prouder than ever of the Highland blood in his veins.

"Never can I forget that day at Sand Point," he said. "I may never return to the grant, but in all the years to come wherever I wander, my thoughts will often turn back to the splendid fellows with whom I fought side by side that afternoon—I—I—I——"

He stammered in sudden confusion. Among the many faces upturned to meet his was one that had brought hesitation to his lips, the face of Flora McIntyre. Hardly had his glance met hers, when she was gone.

Standing not twenty feet away, she had been near enough for him to note that at his words she had gone suddenly pale, as for an instant her eyes had met his.

"I—I—thank you," he concluded rather lamely.

For he had seen in the girl's face, fixed on his in rapt attention, a look of misery that had sent his heart leaping. If ever despair and sorrow looked out from human eyes it had been from hers. Could it be that she had relented? Was there still hope for him?

With uplifted head, he searched for her among the moving crowd. Whatever it might mean he was wild with one overwhelming desire, to hear her voice, to stand face to face with her again. At length his searching gaze noted her walking with bent head along the path by the hedge that marked the boundary of Inch Bhui.

Unnoticed, Murty McGonigal had drifted out of the crowd. Hands in his pockets and whistling softly to himself he was lounging along a hundred yards behind the surveyor.

Flora McIntyre had walked to the edge of the bluff and stood gazing down on the onward sweeping Madawaska

forty feet below. She had turned away a second too soon to notice Craig's sudden confusion, but the cessation of his voice, the burst of cheering that followed it and a backward glance had told her that he was following her.

Dully she wondered why. He had determined to pass out of her life. He had said as much. She might weep in solitary silence, but in the presence of this man not one quiver of lip or eye would there be to tell the secret of her soul. Her gaze as she turned her head was cool and casual.

Craig, whose lips had been framing words of loving appeal, halted hat in hand, disconcerted by the hardness in her eyes. His heart sank, and his hopes took sudden flight. He had been mistaken after all. His first slow words confirmed the girl's hasty conclusion.

"Miss McIntyre," he said formally, "I leave the grant to-morrow and I did not wish to go without thanking you for the many pleasant hours we have spent together, and wishing you all happiness for the future."

For an instant her glance swept his face, then as she saw the melancholy in the man's eyes, and noted the little catch in his voice, over her swept a wave of joyous relief. In spite of this second intimation that he expected to leave the grant, she knew intuitively that when she willed the man would be at her feet again. Yet woman-like she could not bring herself to make his yielding any easier. Her eyes under the drooping lids brightened and the mischievous dimples played about her mouth.

"It is graceful of you, Mr. Craig, and just what I would have expected, even after the mutual conclusion of our last interview. I shall always remember you pleasantly."

Her words were non-committal, but her manner was soft and alluring, as she lifted her lashes and flashed on him one full orb'd glance. Dressed in flowing white, her little straw hat trimmed with crimson flowers, she looked sweet, girlish and altogether lovable.

Craig gazed at her for a moment, then he burst out:

"Oh! Flora, Flora, can you not tell me about that note?"

That is all I ask, we have both been hot-headed and foolish."

"And if I refuse your request," she queried, with a smile as she poked at a tuft of grass with her parasol.

The man stood silent for a space. His chin set.

"Then," he said sadly, "you deny to me the confidence that any betrothed girl owes her lover."

Anxiety darkened her face. She stood fumbling with her parasol, her eyes on the ground. Was she to lose him after all—for she could not—she could not tell him that which he wished, that even for a moment she had contemplated asking money from Allan Dhu.

"Good-bye," said Craig. His face was as grey as hers, as he reached out his hand.

The girl's head drooped like a wilted flower. She turned slightly away, and was reaching out her hand blindly to meet his, when from close at hand a joyous voice sang:

"Spring Time in Connemara,
The hills were soft with green,
With angry words I parted there
From my—Mayo—colleen.

Manny's the spring has come and gone
And the ocean rolls between
But sure me heart is yearning yet
For my—Mayo—colleen."

It was Murty McGonigal's way of announcing his approach and of avoiding even the appearance of eaves-dropping.

Their hand-clasp broke, and they moved apart, but the unmistakable significance of the words of the Irishman's song had brought a mutual smile to their faces.

"Well—well now," exclaimed Murty, with a fine show of surprise, "if this doesn't bate Banagher. I have a message for each of ye and 'tis lucky I am entirely, to be finding ye together."

Reaching into his pocket he drew out a packet of letters and handed them to Flora McIntyre. Craig turned to go.

"Just a minute, Mr. Craig," protested McGonigal. "Just a minute. Ye'd betther be waiting a bit. Don't hurry off. I think I have something for yerself."

Craig's perplexed gaze wandered from the smiling self-possessed Irishman to Flora McIntyre.

As she read the letters the curiosity in her face slowly deepened to utter amazement. Suddenly she raised her head and, looking McGonigal square in the eye, demanded sharply:

"How did you get these, Murty?"

"From Allan Dhu, Miss Flora," he said soberly.

Craig, his face like a thundercloud, turned to go. Murty's hand fell on his arm.

"Just a minute—hould yer horses, Mr. Craig."

Flora's wondering gaze was fixed on Murty.

"From Allan," she exclaimed. "But he is in Montreal."

Murty stepped backward, glanced to right and left, behind the bushes. Satisfied that there was no one within earshot, he motioned with wagging thumb for both to step nearer. Mystified by the man's behaviour, they complied.

For a moment Murty stood silent, his short legs apart, an elbow cupped in the hollow of one hand, the other tapping his pipe stem against his teeth reflectively.

"Mr. Craig and Miss Flora," he said in a whisper, "I want yer wurrud av honour that ye will never tell to anny livin' sowl what I'm goin' to be tellin' ye in a jiffy."

Impressed by the man's earnestness, they murmured assent.

"Allan Dhu is not in Montreal," he said in a low tone. "The man—is dead."

He made a warning motion to still their exclamations of astonishment.

"The poor lad lies two fathom deep, bound about with boom chains in the lake by the Arnprior wharf?"

Quickly he told the story of the midnight tragedy—his own determination to kill the Laird, the suddenness of Allan's assassination, and his own finding of the letters.

"'Twas some affair about an Indian woman that brought Allan to his end, I'm thinkin'," he added.

"Now, by Garrah," he warned, "I've just the same as put me life in your hands. If it ever is found out that Murty McGonigal was out that night with his gun, after swearin' that he'd kill the Laird, it might be bad for mesilf. Sure, there's manny a man would conclude I'd just changed me mind and killed Allan. Kape it quiet, or I might find mesilf in danger av getting me neck stretched."

"Av them letthers there," he said to Flora. "The two consarnin' the Sheriff was open, and I took the privilege av readin' them. The wan to yerself was sealed, and 'tis yet. 'Tis plain that when he was sober, the bye Allan was like the rest av us—a lot av bad and some good."

"I belave this is yours, Mr. Craig," he said, with a sly grin, as he handed the surveyor the ring, which for a few moments had done service at the wedding of Peter McIntyre and Ellen McPherson.

"Now I'll be goin'." At the edge of the bushes he paused and, with a twinkle in his eye, remarked: "Sure now, I hope ye two won't be fightin' whin' I'm gone."

Without a word Flora handed two of the letters to Craig. Perplexed beyond words he opened and read them.

One was a letter containing several bank notes, and a communication to the Sheriff, informing him that the money was to pay for the maintenance of John Mohr McIntyre in Perth jail. It was signed by the Chief. It bore no post marks, and had never been mailed.

The other, dated a week later, was a letter from the Sheriff enquiring why the monthly stipend for McIntyre's maintenance had not been forwarded, and warning the Laird that in case of its non-receipt by a certain date, McIntyre would be released.

Craig, the letters in his hand, stood staring at Flora speculatively.

"He seems to have befriended you," he questioned.

For answer she handed him the other letter addressed to herself.

Slowly he read it. It told of Allan's intention of leaving the grant the day following for Montreal where he had hopes of interesting some Montreal capitalists in the purchase of the Laird's rights in the grant, and concluded with these words:

Only an hour ago I learned of the firing of your home, and I have decided that I can remain no longer under the same roof with the Chancellor, for he, and not my father, is the one to blame. It has come to this, that on my return from Montreal the McNab must choose between me and MacTavish. Either he or I will leave Kennell Lodge forever.

Do not think, Miss McIntyre, that in doing this I have now any hope of reward from you. You have always in your kind and considerate way made me understand that my hopes can never be realized.

I can only bow my head to fate and pray that time will bring surcease of my heartache. If I succeed in my enterprise it will be joy to me to know that I have brought happiness to you. If I fail you will know that I have done my utmost. We may never meet again, but I want you to know that I owe you much that I cannot find words to express. I shall always remember you with gratitude.

Lost in amazement, Craig stood with the letter in his hand staring out over the darkening river, the miles of log-filled booms, and the dim outline of the Pontiac shore. The rhythm of the pipes melting away in the distance told that the merry-makers had left the scene of the celebration.

He stood grappling with the amazing revelation. The man who on that winter night, six months ago, had threatened him with a horrible death—that man had written these words. Slowly the truth dawned upon him—Allan Dhu McNab, the best that was in him stirred to life and being by his love for a girl of a higher and better type than he had ever known before—and she, knowing with a woman's intuition of the transformation, sympathetically and pityingly aiding and encouraging him.

And he had proven the sincerity of his promise by effecting the release of her father, and his determination to risk

even his own inheritance in an effort to aid her cause and the cause of the clansmen by securing the removal of MacTavish.

Whatever Allan's hopes had been, they had not come from any word of encouragement from Flora McIntyre. Even when convinced of the hopelessness of his suit, he had served her as best as he could.

And now the man was dead—dead even in the moment when a new life with a promise of better things was opening before him. Craig's heart softened with pity. He glanced at Flora and noted that her lashes were heavy with unshed tears.

"Flora—Flora," he said humbly. "I understand now. I cannot tell you how all this—confounds me. I have blundered sadly. I—I must ask your forgiveness."

Again the mischief played about her mouth and twinkled in her eyes.

"You do not insist on my answering that question?" she queried demurely, her head on one side.

"No—no. It does not matter now."

"Then you shall know." She laid her hand on his arm and looked up into his face.

"Once and once only did Allan come to our home and on that occasion his conduct was that of a gentleman. He apologised for his rudeness, the day—that day you fought with him, and for the Laird's persecution of my father. There was that about him that carried conviction, and before he left me, he pledged me his word that never again would his hand be lifted against us. He even attempted to assist me by a gift of money, which I—I refused.

"A month later when I had lost all hope of your return, our home was without provisions—another day and my mother would have been hungry. I—I—had decided to ask him for a loan. But I could not. I was about to destroy the very sheet of paper on which I had written his address when you came. It was that which I dropped in the hearth, and has cost us all this—this misery.

"And the day you came upon us—in the lane—we had

met but by accident. Oh, Barclay, if you had seen him that day, so sad, and humble, so crushed and hopeless. I—I could not help being sorry for him.

"Was it—was it such a terrible crime, Barclay?" Her hands were on his shoulders, her eyes, moist and pleading, were looking into his.

Craig's arms went about her; he drew her to him with a force that almost hurt, and kissed the quivering mouth. Her head sank on his shoulder and she wept quiet tears of happiness.

"Dear Murty," she murmured, as she looked down at the ring in its old place on her finger. "Always thinking of others—never of himself."

"Look! Darling," Craig pointed to the moon, full and resplendent slowly sailing above the Laurentians. "See on the lake that golden pathway that leads to the skies. So lies our life before us, with not a dark spot to mar its beauty—for you, for me, and for your people."

"And but for you—for you, it would not have been, my knight—my knight 'sans peur et sans reproche,'" she whispered tremulously, as her lips met his in a long caress.

Further up the river bluff, concealed behind the drooping branches of a giant birch, sat Murty McGonigal, his watchful eyes peering out towards the spot two hundred yards distant where he had left Flora and Craig.

He turned his head with quick attention as he heard the sound of footsteps and the murmur of their voices as they passed, then Flora's quick question.

"Where were you on Hallowe'en—at midnight?"

Craig's virile laugh rang out. "Looking into a mirror, over the shoulder—of the dearest girl in all the world."

"Well, by Garrah—by Garrah," murmured McGonigal. "Think av that, now, wud ye. Think—av—that. And that haythen Narcisse belaves in nuthin' but religion."

Again he glanced through his leafy screen. The two had passed from the obscurity to the edge of the now deserted clearing. For a moment they halted, their figures clearly outlined against the starlit sky.

Murty saw the woman's upraised arms go about the man's neck, and her face lifted to meet his. Quickly he turned his head away.

"Glory be—Glory be to all the Saints," he breathed deep. "'Tis all right—all right at last with them two."

Sighing contentedly like a man who contemplates a day's work well done, he sank back against the tree trunk and busied himself with his pipe.

"Mr. Craig and Miss Flora—Pater and Ellen—The Tarrier and MacTavish gone," he mused, as the smoke curled placidly upward. "The bye Narcisse had the straight av it after all. The Lord do be fixing things in His own way."

"So it goes—so it goes," he concluded. "Workin' and schemin', hatin' and fightin', lovin' and—and dyin'. Sure them's the things that makes it worth while livin'."

EPILOGUE

FORTY years have passed.

The sun is slowly setting on the sea-washed shores of France. Leaning on his cane, the old man looks out over the waste of waters to the west, as he has looked these two score years for the son who never comes. Bent are the stalwart shoulders, snow-white the once golden locks, yet about the lonely figure lingers something of the princely grace of a bygone day.

As the wide world darkens, and one by one break out the lights of the little fishing village, the last Laird of McNab turns away with a weary sigh.

"God forgive me," he murmurs. "I came into the world too late—a hundred years too late."

The bent shoulders tremble, the proud old head droops a little. On the soft night wind floats a smothered sob.

"My clansmen—O! My clansmen."

Heedless of all beneath its searching rays, on sweeps the sun across the watery wilderness. It shines on the hurrying lines in mid-ocean, the fishing smacks on the Newfoundland banks, the rock-bound New England coast. It gleams on the frowning ramparts of Quebec, the white homes of French Canada, the blue of the hurrying rivers, and the silent reaches of the Upper Ottawa.

It lights the long and lonely stretch of Pontiac woods (still wild and unkempt as in far-off days when ruled the McNab on the opposite shore), the great steam mill with its incessant booming, the miles of yellow lumber piles along the Madawaska. It glints on the green of the terraces, and flashes back from the metal-clad cupola of the princely mansion, which stands where once stood Kennell Lodge.

For the prophecy of Amelia Graham, in the fulness of

time has come to pass. The sons and grandsons of "Big Dan" McLachlin, the freighter—commercial magnates of the modern time, now sit in the seat of the McNab.

No more ride the Black Boys on their vengeful raids, no more flits the fiery cross by field and fallow, no more the stately deer graze in the piney grove back of Kennell Lodge, but to the truant school boy that loiters in its sylvan shade still is it known as the "Deer Park of the Chief."

No longer a forest-girdled group of log-cabins is Arnprior, the village of the Chief. Amid wide fertile fields, serene by its rushing dams and screaming mills, it sits content, a thriving modern town, with a peculiar pride in its romantic past and a calm confidence in its future. But memories now are the Indian and fur-trader, and in but a little while the red-sashed and ear-ringed riverman will follow them into the dim realm of the past.

The small home nest, far too narrow to hold its teeming growth, has sent forth, year by year, its bold and venture-some sons. Far and wide have they wandered, the children of the grant. On the wide prairies of the west, in the mines of the Rockies, amid the orange groves of California, and the Klondike's Arctic night, they are ever foremost in the fight to win for civilisation the waste places of the world.

The years have taken their toll. One by one the men who followed their Chief from the distant hills of Scotland have been gathered to their last long homes. Beneath the whispering pines, on the great "Inch Bhui" bluff, high above the mouth of the Madawaska, that sings its never-ending requiem at their feet, sleep the clansmen of McNab, their toils and troubles ended.

But they are not forgotten. Theirs was a fight such as forever echoes down the corridors of time. As long as the human heart holds a love of liberty, as long as the spirit of man stirs with the age-old, yet ever-present struggle of the race striving to free itself from the fetters of the past, so long will they hold a place in the memory of their posterity.

Throughout the length and breadth of the upper Ottawa

valley, in school and shop, in street and market place, to this day the tale is told, by calm-eyed, grey-haired men, whose roughened burr proclaims their Scottish blood.

By many a Canadian fireside, in the long hours of the winter evenings, the wide-eyed, wondering children hearken to the legends of the wit and guile of Murty McGonigal, the wild deeds of the Black Boys, the harrying of the McIntyres, the power, the pride and the undoing of the last Laird of McNab.

THE END





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